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# **AN INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE**





# AN INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE

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## PREFACE

**THE** advances made in Shakespearean scholarship within the last half-dozen years seem to justify the writing of another manual for school and college use. The studies of Wallace in the life-records, of Lounsbury in the history of editions, of Pollard and Greg in early quartos, of Lee upon the First Folio, of Albright and others upon the Elizabethan Theater, as well as valuable monographs on individual plays have all appeared since the last Shakespeare manual was prepared. This little volume aims to present what may be necessary for the majority of classes, as a background upon which may be begun the study and reading of the plays. Critical comment on individual plays has been added, in the hope that it may stimulate interest in other plays than those assigned for study.

Chapters I, VIII, IX, X, and XIII are the work of Professor MacCracken; chapters V, VI, VII, XII, and XIV are by Professor Pierce; and chapters II, III, IV, and XI are by Dr. Durham. The authors have, however, united in the criticism and the revision of every chapter.



# AN INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE

## CHAPTER I

### AN OUTLINE OF SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

**Our Knowledge of Shakespeare.** — No one in Shakespeare's day seems to have been interested in learning about the private lives of the dramatists. The profession of play writing had scarcely begun to be distinguished from that of play acting, and the times were not wholly gone by when all actors had been classed in public estimation as vagabonds. While the London citizens were constant theatergoers, and immensely proud of their fine plays, they were content to learn of the writers of plays merely from town gossip, which passed from lip to lip and found no resting place in memoirs. There were other lives which made far more exciting reading. English seamen were penetrating every ocean, and bringing back wonderful tales. English soldiers were aiding the Dutch nation towards freedom, and coming back full of stories of heroic deeds. At home great political, religious, and scientific movements engaged the attention of the more serious readers and thinkers. It is not strange, therefore, that the writers of plays, whose



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most exciting incidents were tavern brawls or imprisonment for rash satire of the government, found no biographer. After Shakespeare's death, moreover, the theater rapidly fell into disrepute, and many a good story of the playhouse fell under the ban of polite conversation, and was lost.

Under such conditions we cannot wonder that we know so little of Shakespeare, and that we must go to town records, cases at law, and book registers for our knowledge. Thanks to the diligence of modern scholars, however, we know much more of Shakespeare than of most of his fellow-actors and playwrights. The life of Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare's great predecessor, is almost unknown; and of John Fletcher, Shakespeare's great contemporary and successor, it is not even known whether he was married, or when he began to write plays. Yet his father was Bishop of London, and in high favor with Queen Elizabeth. We ought rather to wonder at the good fortune which has preserved for us, however scanty in details or lacking in the authority of its traditions, a continuous record of the life of William Shakespeare from birth to death.

**Stratford.** — The notice of baptism on April 26, 1564, of William, son of John Shakespeare, appears in the church records of Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire. Stratford was then a market town of about fifteen hundred souls. Under Stratford Market Cross the farmers of northern Warwickshire and of the neighboring portions of Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Oxfordshire carried on a brisk trade with the thrifty townspeople. The citizens were accustomed to boast

of their beautiful church by the river, and of the fine Guildhall, where sometimes plays were given by traveling companies. Many of their gable-roofed houses of timber, or timber and plaster, are still to be found on the pleasant old streets. The river Avon winds round the town in a broad reach under the many-arched bridge to the ancient church. Beyond it the rich pasture land rises up to green wooded hills. Not far away is the famous Warwick Castle, and a little beyond it Kenilworth, where Queen Elizabeth was entertained by the Earl of Leicester with great festivities in 1575. Coventry and Rugby are the nearest towns.

**Birth and Parentage.**—The record of baptism of April 26, 1564, is the only evidence we possess of the date of Shakespeare's birth. It is probable that the child was baptized when only two or three days old. The poet's tomb states that Shakespeare was in his fifty-second year when he died, April 23, 1616. Accepting this as strictly true, we cannot place the poet's birthday earlier than April 23, 1564. There is a tradition, with no authority, that the poet died upon his birthday.

John Shakespeare, the poet's father, sold the products of near-by farms to his fellow-townsmen. He is sometimes described as a glover, sometimes as a butcher; very likely he was both. A single reference, half a century later than his day, preserves for us a picture of John Shakespeare. The note reads: "He [William Shakespeare] was a glover's son. Sir John Mennes saw once his old father in his shop, a merry-cheekt old man, that said, 'Will was a good honest

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fellow, but he durst have crackt a jesst with him att any time.'”<sup>1</sup>

John Shakespeare's father, Richard Shakespeare, was a tenant farmer, who was in 1550 renting his little farm at Snitterfield, four miles north of Stratford, from another farmer, Robert Arden of Wilmeote. John Shakespeare married Mary Arden, the daughter of his father's rich landlord, probably in 1557. He had for over five years been a middleman at Stratford, dealing in the produce of his father's farm and other farms in the neighborhood. In April, 1552, we first hear of him in Stratford records, though only as being fined a shilling for not keeping his yard clean. Between 1557 and 1561 he rose to be ale tester (inspector of bread and malt), burgess (petty constable), affeeror (adjuster of fines), and finally city chamberlain (treasurer).

Eight children were born to him, the two eldest, both daughters, dying in infancy. William Shakespeare was the third child, and eldest of those who reached maturity. During his childhood his father was probably in comfortable circumstances, but not long before the son left Stratford for London, John Shakespeare was practically a bankrupt, and had lost by mortgage farms in Snitterfield and Ashbies, near by, inherited in 1556 by his wife.

**Education.** — William Shakespeare probably went to the Stratford Grammar School, where he and his

<sup>1</sup> This reference was discovered among the Plume Mss. (1657-1663) of Maldon, Essex, by Dr. Andrew Clark, in October, 1904. Sir John Mennes was, however, not a contemporary of John Shakespeare, but doubtless merely passed on the description from some eyewitness.

brothers as the sons of a town councilor were entitled to free tuition. His masters, no doubt, taught him Lilly's Latin Grammar and the Latin classics, — Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Cicero, Seneca, and the rest, — and very little else. If Shakespeare ever knew French or Italian, he picked it up in London life, where he picked up most of his amazing stock of information on all subjects. Besides Latin, he must have read and memorized a good deal of the English Bible.

**Marriage.** — In the autumn of 1582 the eighteen-year-old Shakespeare married a young woman of twenty-six. On November 28, of that year two farmers of Shottery, near Stratford, signed what we should call a guarantee bond, agreeing to pay to the Bishop's Court £40, in case the marriage proposed between William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway should turn out to be contrary to the canon — or Church — law, and so invalid. This guarantee bond, no doubt, was issued to facilitate and hasten the wedding. On May 26, 1583, Shakespeare's first child, Susanna, was baptized. His only other children, his son Hamnet and a twin daughter Judith, were baptized February 2, 1584–5<sup>1</sup>. It is probable that soon after this date Shakespeare went to London and began his career as actor, and afterwards as writer of plays and owner of theaters.

<sup>1</sup> The dates between January 1 and March 25, previous to 1752, are always thus written. In 1752 England and its colonies decided to begin the year with January 1 instead of March 25, as formerly. Thus for periods before that date between January 1 and March 25, we give two figures to indicate that the people of that time called it one year and we call it a year later. Thus, Judith Shakespeare would have said she was baptized in 1584, while by our reckoning her baptism came in 1585.

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Anne Hathaway, as we have said, was eight years older than her husband. She was the daughter of a small farmer at Shottery, a little out of Stratford, whose house is still an object of pilgrimage for Shakespeare lovers. We have really no just ground for inferring, from the poet's early departure for London, that his married life was unhappy. The Duke in *Twelfth Night* (IV, iii) advises Viola against women's marrying men younger than themselves, it is true; but such advice is conventional. No one can tell how much the dramatist really felt of the thoughts which his characters utter. Who would guess from any words in *I Henry IV*, for instance, a play containing some of his richest humor and freest joy in life, that, in the very year of its composition, Shakespeare was mourning the death of his little son Hamnet, and that his hopes of founding a family were at an end? Another piece of evidence, far more important, is the fact that Shakespeare does not mention his wife at all in his will, except by an interlined bequest of his "second-best bedroom set." But here, again, it is easy to misread the motives of the man who makes a will. Such omissions have been made when no slight was intended, sometimes because of previous private settlements, sometimes because a wife is always entitled to her dower rights. The evidence is thus too slight to be of value.

Some other motive, then, than unhappiness in married life ought to be assigned for Shakespeare's departure to London. No doubt, the fact that his father was now a discredited bankrupt, against whom suits were pending, had something to do with his

decision to better his family fortunes in another town. Traveling companies of players may have told him of London life. Possibly some scrape, like that preserved in the deer-stealing tradition and the resultant persecution, made the young man, now only twenty-one, restive and eager to be gone.

**The Tradition concerning Deer Stealing.**—Nicholas Rowe, in 1709, in his edition of Shakespeare says: "He had by a misfortune common enough to young fellows fallen into bad company, and among them, some that made a frequent practice of deer stealing, engaged him with them more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote near Stratford. For this he was persecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and, in order to revenge that ill-usage, he made a parody upon him; and though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire and shelter himself in London." Archdeacon Davies of Saperton, Gloucestershire, in the late seventeenth century testifies independently to the same tradition. Justice Shallow in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* is on this latter authority to be identified with Sir Thomas Lucy. He is represented in the play as having come from Gloucester to Windsor. He "will make a Star Chamber matter of it" that Sir John Falstaff has "defied my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge." He bears on his "old coat" (of arms) a "dozen white luces" (small fishes), and there is a lot of chatter about "quartering" this coat, which is without point unless a pun is intended.

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Now "three lucas Hauriant argent" were the arms of the Charlecote Lucys, it is certain. There is some reason then, for connecting Shallow with Sir Thomas Lucy, and an apparent basis for the deer-stealing tradition, although the incident in the play may, of course, have suggested the myth. Davies goes on to say that Shakespeare was whipped and imprisoned; for this there is no other evidence.

**Early Life in London.** — The earliest known reference to Shakespeare in the world of London is contained in a sarcastic allusion from the pen of Robert Greene, the poet and play writer, who died in 1592. Greene was furiously jealous of the rapidly increasing fame of the newcomer. In a most extravagant style he warns his contemporaries (Marlowe, Nash, and Peele, probably) to beware of young men that seek fame by thieving from their masters. They, too, like himself, will suffer from such thieves. "Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers that, with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shakescene in a countrie . . . but it is pittie men of such rare wit should be subject to the pleasures of such rude grooms." The reference to "Shakescene" and the "Tygers heart," which is a quotation from *III Henry VI*,<sup>1</sup> makes it almost certain that Shakespeare and his play are referred to. Greene's attack was, however, an instance of what Shakespeare would

<sup>1</sup> "O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide." This line is also in the source of Shakespeare's play. See p 133.

have called "spleen," and not to be taken as a general opinion. His hint of "Johannes Factotum" (Jack-of-all-Trades) probably means that Shakespeare was willing to undertake any sort of dramatic work. Later on in the same letter (*A Groatsworth of Witte Bought with a Million of Repentance*)<sup>1</sup> he calls the "upstart crow" and his like "Buckram gentlemen," and "peasants."

Henry Chettle, a friend of Greene's, either in December, 1592, or early in 1593,<sup>2</sup> published an address as a preface to his *Kind-Harts Dreame*, making a public apology to Shakespeare for allowing Greene's letter to come out with this insulting attack. He says: "With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other [generally taken to be Shakespeare] whome at one time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had, for that, as I have moderated the heate of living writers, and might have usde my owne discretion — especially in such a case, the author beeing dead, — that I did not I am as sory as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because myself have seene his demeanor no lesse civill, than he exelent in the qualitie he professes; — besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that aprooves his art. . . ."

There is, then, testimony from two sources that by 1592 Shakespeare was an excellent actor, a graceful poet, and a writer of plays that aroused the envy of

<sup>1</sup> Printed first in 1596, but written shortly before Greene's death in 1592.

<sup>2</sup> Registered Dec., 1592, but printed without date.



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one of the best dramatists of his day. Obviously, all this could not have happened in a few months, and we are therefore justified in believing that Shakespeare came to London soon after 1585, very likely in 1586.

**Later Allusions.** — In 1593 the title-page of *Venus and Adonis* shows that a great English earl and patron of the arts was willing to be godfather “to the first heyre” of Shakespeare’s “invention,” his first published poem. In 1594 Shakespeare also dedicated to Southampton his *Lucrece*, in terms of greater intimacy, though no less respect. On December 27, 1595, Edmund Spenser’s *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* contained a reference which is now generally believed to allude to Shakespeare.

“And there, though last not least, is Ætion;  
A gentler shepherd may nowhere be found;  
Whose Muse, full of high thoughts’ invention,  
Doth like himselfe heroically sound.”

The next important reference is from *Palladis Tamia*, by Francis Meres (1598): —

“As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare; witness his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends &c. As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and Tragedy among the Latines, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witnes his Gentlemen of Verona, his Errors, his Loves Labors Lost, his Love Labours Wonne, his Midsummer Night Dreame, and his Merchant of Venice; for tragedy his Richard the 2., Richard the 3., Henry the 4.,

King John, Titus Andronicus, and his Romeo and Juliet. As Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speake with Plautus tongue, if they would speak Latin, so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrase, if they would speak English. And as Horace saith of his; *Exegi monumentum aere perennius, Regalique situ pyramidum altius.*

"Quod non imber edax: Non Aquilo impotius possit diruere: aut innumerabilis annorum series et fuga temporum: so say I severally of Sir Philip Sidney's Spencers Daniels Draytons Shakespeares and Warners workes."

This is the earliest claim for the supremacy of Shakespeare in the English theater, a claim never seriously disputed from that day to this. The numerous other contemporary allusions to Shakespeare's fame, which fill the *Shakespeare Allusion Book*,<sup>1</sup> add nothing to our purpose; but merely confirm the statement that throughout his life his readers knew and admitted his worth. The chorus of praise continued from people of all classes. John Weever, the epigrammatist, and Richard Camden, the antiquarian, praised Shakespeare highly, and Michael Drayton, the poet, called him "perfection in a man." Finally, Ben Jonson, his most famous competitor for public applause, crowned our poet's fame with his poem, prefixed to the first collected edition of Shakespeare's famous First Folio of 1623: "To the Memory of my beloved, the author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us.

<sup>1</sup> These may be seen, as well as all others up to 1700, in the re-edited *Shakespeare Allusion Book*, ed. J. Munro, London, 1909.

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“ He was not of an age, but for all time ! ”

**Shakespeare as an Actor.** — The allusion quoted above of Henry Chettle praises Shakespeare's excellence “ in the qualitie he professes.” Stronger evidence is afforded by some of the title-pages of plays printed during the poet's life. Thus Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* says on its title-page: “ *Every One in his Umor.* This comedie was first Acted in the yeere 1598 by the then L. Chamberleyne his servants. The principal comedians were Will. Shakespeare, Aug. Philips, Hen. Condel, Will. Slye, Will. Kempe, Ric. Burbadge, Joh. Hemings, Tho. Pope, Chr. Beeston, Joh. Dyke, withe the allowance of the Master of Reuells.”

Before this his name had appeared between those of Kemp and Burbage (named in the above list), the one the chief comedian, the other the chief tragedian of the time, in comedies which were acted before the Queen on December 27 and 28, 1594, at Greenwich Palace. The titles of these comedies are not given in the Treasurer's Accounts of the Chamber, from which we take the list of players.

In 1603, Shakespeare shared with Burbage the headline of the list of actors in Ben Jonson's tragedy *Sejanus*. That he thoroughly understood the technique of his art and was interested in it, is evident from Hamlet's advice to the players. Throughout his life in London, Shakespeare was a member of the company usually known as the Lord Chamberlain's Company.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 48.

**Shakespeare and the Mountjoys.** — The most important addition of recent years to the life records of Shakespeare is that made by an American scholar, Professor Charles William Wallace. He has unearthed in the Public Record Office at London a notable bundle of documents — twenty-six in all. They concern a lawsuit in which the family of Christopher Mountjoy, Shakespeare's landlord in London, was engaged; and in which the poet himself appeared as a witness. Mountjoy, it appears, was a prosperous wigmaker and hairdresser, and, no doubt, had good custom from the London actors. Shakespeare had lodgings in Mountjoy's house in the year 1604, and at Madame Mountjoy's request acted as intermediary in proposing to young Stephen Bellott, a young French apprentice of Mountjoy's, that if he should marry his master's daughter Mary, he would receive £50 as dowry and "certain household stuff" in addition. The marriage took place, and the quarrel which led to the lawsuit in 1612 was chiefly about the fulfillment — or non-fulfillment — of the marriage settlements. Shakespeare's testimony on the matter is clear enough in regard to his services as the friend of both parties; but his memory leaves him when specific information is required touching the exact terms of the dowry. Evidently he had no mind that his old landlord should suffer from the claims of his unruly son-in-law.

Mountjoy's house was situated in an ancient and most respectable neighborhood in Cripplegate ward, on the corner of Silver Street and Mugwell, or Muggle Street. Near by dwelt many of Shakespeare's fellow-actors and dramatists. St. Paul's Cathedral, the heart

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of London, lay five minutes' walk to the southwest. The length of Shakespeare's residence with the worthy Huguenot family is not to be learned from the recent discoveries; but his testimony to Bellott's faithful service as apprentice throughout the years of apprenticeship — 1598-1604 — makes it strongly probable that during these years, when the poet was writing his greatest plays, he lodged with Mountjoy. In 1612 Mountjoy, according to another witness, had a lodger — a "sojourner" — in his house; this may mean that Shakespeare was still in possession of his rooms in the house on Silver Street. If it be so, no spot in the world has been the birthplace of a greater number of masterpieces.

It is interesting to note, in passing, that the various witnesses in the Mountjoy lawsuit who have occasion to speak of Shakespeare always refer to him most respectfully. The poet was evidently high in the esteem of his neighbors.

**Shakespeare's Income and Business Transactions.** — Shakespeare was a shrewd and sensible man of business. He amassed during his career in London a property nearly, if not quite, as great as any made by his profession at the time. In addition to profits from the sale of his plays to managers (he probably derived no income from their publication), and his salary as an actor, Shakespeare enjoyed an ample income from his shares in the Blackfriars and Globe theaters, of which he became joint owner with the Burbage brothers and other fellow-actors in 1597 and 1599. Professor Wallace has discovered a document which helps, though very slightly, to enable us to judge what his income

from these sources may have been.<sup>1</sup> In 1615-1616 the widow of one of the proprietors of the two theaters, whose share, like Shakespeare's, was one-seventh of the Blackfriars, one-fourteenth of the Globe, brought suit against her father. She asked for £600 damages for her father's wrongful detention of her year's income, amounting to £300 from each theater.

But damages asked in court are always high, and include fees of lawyers and other items. The probability is that Shakespeare's yearly income from these sources was never over £500. To this, though the figures cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty, we might add £100 for salary and £25 for plays yearly. The total would amount to fully £600 a year from 1599 on till 1611, about which date Shakespeare probably retired to Stratford. If we reckon by what money will buy in our days, we may say that Shakespeare's yearly income at the height of success was \$25,000, in round numbers. This is certainly a low estimate, and does not include extra court performances and the like, from which he must certainly have profited.

**Shakespeare's Life in London.** — What with the composition of two plays a year, continual rehearsals, and performances of his own and other plays, Shakespeare's life must have been a busy one. Tradition, however, accords him an easy enjoyment of the pleasures of the time; and his own sarcastic remarks against Puritans in his plays may indicate a hatred of puritanical restraint. He must have joined in many a merry feast with the other actors and writers of the day, and with court gallants. The inventory of property left by him

<sup>1</sup> See the *New York Times* for October 3, 1909.

at his death indicates that while he had accumulated a good estate, he had also lived generously.

**Stratford Affairs and Shakespeare's Return.** — While William Shakespeare was thus employed in London in building up name and fortune for himself, his father was in financial straits. As early as January, 1586, John Shakespeare had no property on which a creditor could place a lien. In September of the same year, he was deprived of his alderman's gown for lack of attention to town business. During the next year he was sued for debt, and had to produce a writ of *habeas corpus* to keep himself out of jail. In 1599 he tried to recover his wife's mortgaged property of Ashbies from the mortgagee's heir, John Lambert, but the suit was not tried till eight years later. Soon after this the son must have begun to send to Stratford substantial support. In 1592 John Shakespeare was made an appraiser of the property of Henry Field, a fellow-townsmen. Henry Field's son Richard published *Venus and Adonis* for Shakespeare in 1593, from his shop in St. Paul's Churchyard. From this time John Shakespeare seems to have lived in comfort. His ambition to secure the grant of a coat of arms was almost successful at his first application for one in October, 1596; three years later the grant was made, and his son and he were now "Gentlemen."

In May, 1597, William Shakespeare bought New Place, a handsome house in the heart of Stratford, and at once became an influential citizen. From that time to his death he is continually mentioned in the town records. His purchases included 107 acres in

Old Stratford (May 1, 1602), for £320; the right to farm the Stratford tithes (July 24, 1605), for £440; an estate of the Combe family (April 13, 1610), and minor properties. In all his dealings, so far as we can tell, he seems to have been shrewd and business-like.

Little is known of Shakespeare's children during these years. Hamnet, his only son, was buried August 11, 1596. Susanna, the eldest daughter, married a physician, Dr. John Hall, of Stratford, June 5, 1607; Judith married Thomas Quiney, son of an old Stratford friend of Shakespeare's, February 10, 1616, two months before her father's death. Shakespeare's father had died long before this, in September, 1601.

Shakespeare's retirement from London to his native town is thought to have taken place about 1611, though there is no real evidence for this belief, except that his play writing probably ceased about this date. In 1614 a Puritan preacher stopped at New Place and was entertained there by the poet's family. It is certain that Shakespeare visited London from time to time after 1611. One such visit is recorded in the diary of his lawyer, Thomas Greene, of Stratford. As late as March 24, 1613, there occurs an entry in the accounts of the Earl of Rutland of a payment to Shakespeare and Richard Burbage of 44 shillings each in gold for getting up a dramatic entertainment for the Earl of Rutland. .

In 1616 Shakespeare's health failed. On January 25, a copy of his will was drawn, which was executed March 25. On April 23, 1616, he died, and two days later was buried in the chancel of Stratford church.



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**Shakespeare's Portraits, Tomb, and Descendants.**—Two portraits, the "Ely Palace" and the "Flower" portraits, so called from former possessors, are thought to have better claims to authenticity than others. New discoveries are announced, periodically, of Shakespeare's portrait; but these turn out usually to be forgeries. The engraving by Martin Droeshout prefixed to the First and later Folios, though to us it seems unanimated and unnatural, is still the only likeness vouched for by contemporaries. It is thought by many to be a copy of the "Flower" portrait, which bears the date 1609, and which it certainly very closely resembles. If the Stratford bust which was placed in a niche above Shakespeare's tomb in Stratford church before 1623 was accurately reproduced in Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, then the present bust is a later substitution, since it shows differences in detail from that sketch. It is coming to be believed that the eighteenth-century restoration so altered the bust as to make it quite unlike its former appearance.

Shakespeare's grave is in the chancel of Stratford church. A dark, flat tombstone bears the inscription, which early tradition ascribes to the poet:—

"Good frend, for Iesvs sake forbear  
To digg the dvst enclosed heare:  
Bleste be y<sup>e</sup> man y<sup>t</sup> spares thes stones,  
And curst be he y<sup>t</sup> moves my bones."

The monument to Shakespeare, with the bust on the north wall, is facing the tomb.

In his will, Shakespeare provided that much the larger portion of his estate should go to his eldest daughter, Susanna Hall and John Hall, Gent., her husband, including New Place, Henley Street and Blackfriars houses, and his tithes in Stratford and near-by villages. This was in accordance with custom. To Judith, his younger daughter, the wife of Thomas Quiney, he left three hundred pounds, one hundred as a marriage portion, fifty more on her release of her right in a Stratford tenement, and the rest to be paid in three years, the principal to be invested, the interest paid to her, and the principal to be divided at her death.

Shakespeare left his sister, Joan Hart, £20 and his wearing apparel, and her house in Stratford rent-free till her death, at a shilling a year. His plate he divided between his daughters. The minor bequests, which include £10 to the Stratford poor, are chiefly notable for the bequest of money (26s. 8d.) for rings to "my fellowes, John Hemynges, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell." These were fellow-actors in the Lord Chamberlain's Company.

Within half a century Shakespeare's line was extinct. His wife died August 6, 1623. His daughter Susanna left one daughter, Elizabeth, who married, April 22, 1626, Thomas Nashe, who died April 4, 1647. On June 5, 1649, she married John Barnard of Abington, Northamptonshire, afterwards knighted. She left no children by either marriage. Her burial was recorded February 17, 1669-70. Shakespeare's daughter Judith had three sons, — Shakespeare, baptized November 23, 1616, buried May 8, 1617; Richard, baptized February 9, 1617-8, buried February 16, 1638-9; Thomas, baptized January 23, 1619-20, buried January 1638-9. Judith Shakespeare survived them all, and was buried February 9, 1661-2. Shakespeare's sister, Joan Hart, left descendants who owned the Henley Street House up to the time of its purchase, in 1847, by the nation.

The best books on the life of Shakespeare: J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, tenth edition, London, 1898 (the greatest collection of sources and documents); Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare* (New York, Macmillan, 1909), (the best extended life, especially valuable for its study of the biographical value of the sonnets); Professor Wallace's articles referred to in the text.

## CHAPTER II

### ENGLISH DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

THE history of the drama includes two periods of supreme achievement, that of fifth-century Greece and that of Elizabethan England. Between these peaks lies a broad valley, the bottom of which is formed by the centuries from the fifth to the ninth after Christ. From its culmination in the tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and in the comedies of Aristophanes, the classic drama declined through the brilliantly realistic comedies of Menander to the coldly rhetorical tragedies of the Roman Seneca. The decay of culture, the barbarian invasions, and the attacks of the Christian Church caused a yet greater decadence, a fall so complete that, although the old traditions were kept alive for some time at the Byzantine court, the drama, as a literary form, had practically disappeared from western Europe before the middle of the sixth century. For this reason the modern drama is commonly regarded as a new birth, as an independent creation entirely distinct from the art which had preceded it. A new birth and an independent growth there certainly was, but it must not be forgotten that the love of the dramatic did not disappear with the literary drama, that the entertainment of mediæval

minstrels were not without dramatic elements, that dialogues continued to be written if not acted, and that the classical drama of Rome, eagerly studied by the enthusiasts of the Renaissance, had no slight influence upon the course which the modern drama took. If we make these qualifications, we may fairly say that the old drama died and that a new drama was born.

**The Beginnings of Modern Drama.** — When we search for the origin of the modern drama, we find it, strangely enough, in the very institution which had done so much to suppress it as an invention of the devil; for it made its first appearance in the services of the Church. From a very early period, the worship of the Church had possessed a certain dramatic character. The service of the Mass recalled and represented by symbols, which became more and more definite and elaborate, the great sacrifice of Christ. And this tendency manifested itself in other ways, such as the letting fall, on Good Friday, of the veil which had concealed the sanctuary since the first Sunday in Lent, thus recalling the veil of the Jewish temple rent in twain at the death of Christ. But all this was rather the soil in which the drama could grow than the beginning itself. The latter came in the ninth century, when an addition was made to the Mass which was slight in itself, but which was to have momentous consequences. Among the words fitted to certain newly introduced melodies were those of which the following is a translation:—

“ Whom seek ye, O Christians, in the sepulcher ?

Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, O ye dwellers in Heaven.

He is not here ; he is risen as he foretold.

Go and carry the tidings that he is risen from the sepulcher.”

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*At first these words were sung responsively by the choir, but before the end of the tenth century they were put into the mouths of monks or clergy representing the Maries and the angel. By this time the dialogue had been removed to the first services of Easter morning, and had been connected with the ceremonies of the Easter sepulcher. In many churches it was then customary on Good Friday to carry a crucifix to a representation of a sepulcher which had previously been prepared somewhere in the church, whence the crucifix was secretly removed before Easter morning. Then, at the first Easter service, the empty sepulcher was solemnly visited, and this dialogue was sung.<sup>1</sup> The participants wore ecclesiastical vestments, and the acting was of the simplest character, but the amount of dialogue increased as time went on, and new bits of action were added; so that before the end of the twelfth century some churches presented what may fairly be called a short one-act play. Meanwhile, around the services of Good Friday and the Christmas season, other dramatic ceremonies and short dialogues had been growing up, which gave rise to tiny plays dealing with the birth of Christ, the visits of the shepherds and the Wise Men, and the Old Testament prophecies of*

<sup>1</sup> An extract from the *Concordia Regularis*, a tenth-century appendix to the monastic "rule" of St. Benedict, describes this ceremony. "While the third respond is chanted, let the remaining three follow [one of the brethren, vested in an alb, had before this quietly taken his place at the sepulcher], and let them all, vested in copes, and bearing in their hands thuribles with incense, and stepping delicately, as those who seek something, approach the sepulcher. These things are done in imitation of the angel sitting in the monument, and the women with spices coming to anoint the body of Jesus."

*Christ's coming.* Although the elaboration of individual plays continued, the evolution of the drama as part of the Church's liturgy was practically complete by the middle of the thirteenth century.

**The Earlier Miracle Plays.** — The next hundred years brought a number of important changes: the gradual substitution of English for Latin, the removal from the church to the churchyard or market-place, and the welding together of the single plays into great groups or cycles. The removal from the church was made possible by the growth of the plays in length and dramatic interest, which rendered them independent of the rest of the service; and it was made inevitable by the enormous popularity of the plays and by the more elaborate staging which the developed plays required. The formation of more or less unified cycles was the result of a natural tendency to supply the missing links between the plays already in existence, and to write new plays describing the events which led up to those already treated. Just as Wagner in our day after writing his drama on *The Death of Siegfried* felt himself compelled to write other plays dealing with his hero's birth and the events which led to this birth, so the unknown authors of the great English cycles were led to write play after play until they had covered the significant events of Biblical history from the creation of the world to the Last Judgment. This joining together of isolated plays necessitated taking them away from the particular festivals with which they had originally been connected and presenting them all together on a single day, or, in the case of the longer cycles, on successive days. After 1264,

when the festival of Corpus Christi was established in honor of the sacrament of Holy Communion, this day was the favorite time of presentation. Coming as it did in early summer on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, it was well suited for out-of-door performances, besides being a festival which the Church especially delighted to honor.

**The Great English Cycles.** — Of the great cycles of miracle plays, only four have come down to us: those given at York and at Chester, that in the Towneley collection (probably given at or near Wakefield), and the cycle called the *Ludus Coventriæ* or *Hegge* plays, of which the place of presentation is uncertain. The surviving fragments of lost cycles, however, taken together with the records of performances, show that religious plays were given with more or less regularity in at least one hundred and twenty-five places in England. The cycle which has been most completely preserved is that of York, forty-eight plays of which still exist. It originally included fifty-seven plays, while the number of Biblical incidents known to have been treated in plays belonging to one cycle or another includes twenty-one based on the Old Testament or on legends, and sixty-eight based on the New Testament.

Even while the religious plays were still a part of the Church services, they contained humorous elements, such as the realistically comic figure of the merchant who sold spices and ointment to the Maries on their way to the tomb of Christ. In the later plays these interpolations developed into scenes of roaring farce. When Herod learned of the escape of the Wise Men, he would rage violently about the stage and even among

the spectators. Noah's wife, in the Chester play of *The Deluge*, refuses point-blank to go into the Ark, and has to be put in by main force. The *Second Shepherds' Play* of the Towneley cycle contains an episode of sheep stealing which is a complete and perfect little farce. Nor were the scenes of pathos less effective. The scene in the Brome play of *Abraham and Isaac* where the little lad pleads for his life has not lost its pathetic appeal with the passage of centuries. While many of the miracle plays seem to us stiff and perfunctory, the best of them possess literary merit of a very high order.

As the development of the plays called for an increasing number of actors, the clergy had to call upon the laity for help, so that the acting fell more and more into the hands of the latter, until finally the whole work of presenting the plays was taken over, in most cases, by the guilds, organizations of the various trades which corresponded roughly to our modern trades unions. Each guild had its own play of which it bore the expense and for which it furnished the actors. Thus the shipwrights would present *The Building of the Ark*, the goldsmiths, *The Adoration of the Wise Men*. Sometimes the plays would be presented on a number of tiny stages or scaffolds grouped in a rectangle or a circle; more often they were acted on floats, called pageants, which were dragged through the streets and stopped for performances at several of the larger squares. These pageants were usually of two stories, the lower used for a dressing-room, the upper for a stage. The localities represented were indicated in various ways — Heaven, for instance, by a beautiful



pavilion; Hell, by the mouth of a huge dragon. The costumes of the actors were often elaborate and costly, and there was some attempt at imitating reality, such as putting the devils into costumes of yellow and black, which typified the flames and darkness of Hell.

Fairly complete cycles were in existence as early as 1300; they reached the height of their perfection and popularity in the later fourteenth and in the fifteenth centuries; and they began to decline in the sixteenth century. After 1550 the performances became more and more irregular, until, at the accession of King James I, they had practically ceased.

**The Moralities.** — Of somewhat later origin than the miracle plays, but existing contemporaneously with them, were the moralities. In a twelfth-century miracle play characters had been introduced which were not the figures of Biblical story, but personified abstractions, such as Hypocrisy, Heresy, Pity. By the end of the fourteenth century there had come into existence plays of which all the characters were of this type. These, however, were probably not direct descendants of the miracles; but rather the application of the newly learned dramatic methods to another sort of subject matter, the allegory, a literary type much used by poets and preachers of the time. Such plays were called 'moral plays' or 'moralities.' Unlike the miracle plays, these remained independent of each other, and showed no tendency to grow together into cycles. The most beautiful of them, written at the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century, is that called *The Summoning of Everyman*. It represents a typical man compelled to enter upon the long,

inevitable journey of death. Kindred and Wealth abandon him, but long-neglected Good-deeds, revived by Knowledge, comes to his aid. At the edge of the grave Everyman is deserted by Beauty, Strength, and the Five Senses, while Good-deeds alone goes with him to the end. Moralities of this type aimed at the cultivation of virtue in the spectators, just as the miracle plays had aimed at the strengthening of their faith. Another type of morality dealt with controversial questions. In one of these, *King Johan*, written about 1538, historical personages are put side by side with the allegorical abstractions, thus foreshadowing the later historical plays, such as Shakespeare's *King John*. Another comparatively late type of morality sought to teach an ethical lesson by showing the effect of vice and virtue upon the lives of men and women. *Nice Wanton* (c. 1550), for instance, represents the consequence of good and evil living, not only by the use of such allegorical characters as Iniquity and Worldly Shame, but also by means of the human beings, Barnabas and Ishmael and their sister Dalila. Thus, although the more abstract moralities persisted until late in the sixteenth century, these other types at the same time helped lead the way to the drama which depicts actual life.

**The Interlude.** — Both miracle play and morality were written with a definite purpose, the teaching of a lesson, religious, moral, or political; the interlude, on the other hand, was a short play intended simply to interest or to amuse. The original meaning of the word "interlude" is a matter of controversy. It may have meant a short play introduced between other

things, such as the courses of a banquet, or it may have meant simply a dialogue. Be that as it may, the interlude seems to have had its origin in the dramatic character of minstrel entertainments and in the dramatic character of popular games, such as those, especially beloved of our English ancestors, which celebrated the memory of Robin Hood and his fellow-outlaws of Sherwood forest. The miracle plays set the example of dramatic composition, an example soon followed in the interlude, which put into dramatic forms that became more and more elaborate popular stories and episodes, both serious and comic. Although there had been comic episodes in miracle plays and moralities, it was as interludes that the amusing skit and the tiny farce achieved an independent existence. The first real interlude which has come down to us is that called *De Clerico et Puella*, *Of the Cleric and the Maiden*, which was written not later than the early fourteenth century. This is little more than a dialogue depicting the attempted seduction of a maiden by a wanton cleric. The only other surviving fourteenth-century interlude, that of *Dux Morand*, is, on the other hand, the dramatization of a tragic tale of incest and murder. This is, however, somewhat exceptional, and may perhaps be regarded as belonging rather to a type of miracle play not common in England, in which the intervention of some heavenly power affects the lives of men. At any rate, it is probable that the interlude was not often so serious an affair, and it developed rapidly in a way that gave us, in the sixteenth century, the interludes of John Heywood (1497-1577), which are really short farces,

and no bad ones at that. By reason of its character and the small number of actors which it required, the interlude was usually given by professional entertainers, who were either kept by persons of high rank, or traveled from town to town. We find, therefore, in the acting of interludes the conditions which gave rise to modern comedy and to the modern traveling company.

**Classical Influences.** — In the preceding paragraphs we have considered the early modern drama as an independent growth, but the influence of the classical drama, particularly the Latin tragedies of Seneca and the Latin comedies of Plautus and Terence, showed itself in the later moralities and interludes, and was to appear again and again in the later course of English drama. That great revival of interest in classical learning which gave the Renaissance its name, was a mighty force in the current of English thought throughout the sixteenth century. The old Latin tragedies and comedies were revived and were produced in the original and in translation at schools and colleges. It was an easy step from this to the writing of English comedies after Latin models. The earliest of such attempts which we know is the comedy of *Ralph Roister Doister*, written by Nicholas Udall for Eton boys at some time between 1534 and 1541. This, commonly called the first English comedy, is little more than a clever adaptation of Plautus to English manners and customs; but a comedy written soon after, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, is really an Interlude cast in the Plautean mold. The first English tragedy, *Gorboduc*, closely imitative of Seneca, but on

a mythical British subject and written in English blank verse, did not appear until 1562, nearly a quarter of a century later. Seneca's tragedies had little action, slight characterization, and many extremely long speeches, which often display, however, much brilliant rhetoric. *Gorboduc* has all these qualities except the brilliance. The history, the third of the types into which the editors of the First Folio were to divide Shakespeare's plays, was also affected by Senecan influence. We have already seen how the historical figure of King John appeared in a morality, one which shows little trace of classical tradition; and the history, with its general formlessness and its mixture of the comic with the serious, remained a peculiarly English product. Nevertheless, in the second half of the sixteenth century, subjects from English history were treated after the manner of Latin tragedy, and the long, rhetorical speeches of the later historical plays are more suggestive of Seneca than are most Elizabethan tragedies.

The classical type of drama, with its strict observance of the three unities,<sup>1</sup> was not congenial to the

<sup>1</sup> The three unities of action, place, and time are usually believed to have been formulated by Aristotle, who is supposed to have said that a tragedy should have but a single plot and that the action should be confined to a single day and a single place. As a matter of fact, Aristotle is responsible for only the first of these, and this he presented as an observation on the actual condition which prevailed in Greek tragedy rather than as a dramatic principle for all time. The other principles, which were later deduced from the general practice of the Greeks, — a practice arising from the manner in which their plays were staged, — were, together with the first, elevated by the Romans to the dignity of fixed dramatic laws.

English temperament. Its fetters were soon thrown off, and, with the notable exception of Ben Jonson (1573-1637), few Elizabethan playwrights conformed to its rules. Its influence, however, was not confined to its imitators. From the classical drama the Elizabethans gained a sense for form and for the value of dramatic technique, which did much to make the Elizabethan drama what it was.

**Three Predecessors of Shakespeare.** — The development of the English drama from the first attempts at comedy, tragedy, and history was extremely rapid. When Shakespeare came to London, he found there dramatists who were far on the road toward mastery of dramatic form, and who were putting into that form both great poetry and a profound knowledge of human nature. A complete list of these dramatists would include a number of names which have a permanent place in the history of English literature, such as those of Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nash, George Peele, and Robert Greene. Among these names three deserve especial prominence, not only because of the great achievements of these men, but because of their influence on Shakespeare. These men were Marlowe, Kyd, and Lyly.

It was Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) who first gave to English blank verse those qualities which make it an extraordinarily perfect medium of expression. Before him, blank verse had no advantages to offer in compensation for the abandonment of rime. It was stiff, monotonous, and cold. Marlowe began to vary the position of the pauses within the line, and to do away with the pause at the end of some lines by

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placing the breaks in thought elsewhere. Thus he gave to his verse ease, flexibility, and movement, and he put into it the warmth and vividness of his own personality. Upon such verse as this Shakespeare could hardly improve. But this by no means sums up his debt to Marlowe. His characterization of Richard III, for instance, was distinctly affected by that of Marlowe's hero Tamburlaine, a character to which the poet had given a passionate life and an energy that made him more than human. In other ways less easy to define, Shakespeare must have been stimulated by Marlowe's fire. The latter's greatest tragedies, *Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, and *Edward II*, contain poetry so beautiful, feeling so intense, and a promise of future achievement so remarkable, that his early death may fairly be said to have deprived English literature of a genius worthy of comparison with that of Shakespeare himself.

Although Thomas Kyd (1558-1594) was far from the equal of Marlowe, he was a playwright of real ability and one whose tragedies were unusually popular. Influenced greatly by Seneca, he brought to its climax the 'tragedy of blood'—a type of drama in which ungovernable passions of lust and revenge lead to atrocious crimes and end in gruesome and appalling murders. His famous *Spanish Tragedy* was the forerunner of many similar plays, of which *Titus Andronicus* was one. He probably wrote the original play of *Hamlet*, which was elevated by Shakespeare out of its atmosphere of blood and horror into the highest realms of thought and poetry.

John Lyly (c. 1554-1606) was a master in an en-

tirely different field, that of highly artificial comedy. He brought court comedy to a hitherto unattained perfection of form and style, and in his best work, *Endymion*, he displayed a lovely delicacy of thought and expression which has kept his reputation secure. He is best known, however, for his prose romance, *Euphues*, which gave its name to the style of which it was the climax. Euphuism is a manner of writing marked by elaborate antithesis and alliteration, and ornamented by fantastic similes drawn from a mass of legendary lore concerning plants and animals.<sup>1</sup> This style, which nowadays seems labored and in-artistic, was excessively admired by the Elizabethans. Shakespeare imitated it to some extent in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and parodied it in Falstaff's speech to Prince Hal, *I Henry IV*, II, iv. Several of Shakespeare's earlier comedies show Lyly's influence for good and ill — ill, in that it made for artificiality and strained conceits; good, in that it made for perfection of dramatic form and refinement of expression.

**The Masque.** — Somewhat apart from the main current of dramatic evolution is the development of the masque, which became extremely popular in the reign of James I. The English masque was an entertainment, dramatic in character, made up of songs, dialogue, and dances. It originated in masked balls given by the nobility or at court. To John Lydgate, working about 1430, is probably due the credit for introducing into such

<sup>1</sup> The following quotation from *Euphues* (ed. Bond, i, 289) illustrates this style: "Hee that seeketh ye depth of knowledge is as it were in a Laborinth, in which the farther he goeth, the farther he is from the end: or like the bird in the limebush which the more she striveth to get out, ye faster she sticketh in." With this cf. *Hamlet*, III, iii, 69; *I Henry IV*, II, iv, 441.



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disguisings a literary element, while the later course of the masque owes much to Italy. In the developed masque there were two classes of participants: noble amateurs, who wore elaborate costumes and danced either among themselves or with the spectators; and professional entertainers, who spoke and sang. The later masques had elaborate scenery and costumes, with just as much plot as would serve to string together the lyrics and dances. Sometimes an anti-masque of grotesque figures was introduced to serve as contrast to the beautiful figures of the masque. The masques were produced with the utmost lavishness, the most extravagant one of which we know costing over £20,000. Some of them, such as those written by Ben Jonson, contain charming poetry; but their chief interest to the student of Shakespeare lies in the fact that their great popularity caused Shakespeare to introduce short masques into some of his plays, notably *Henry VIII*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. In similar allegorical dances often given between the acts of Italian plays, has been sought the origin of the 'dumb-show,' which was occasionally introduced into English tragedies, and which appears in the Mouse-Trap given in *Hamlet*.

The most useful general histories of this period are: F. E. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama* (Houghton Mifflin, 1908); E. K. Chambers, *The Mediæval Stage* (Oxford, 1903); and Creizenach, *Geschichte des neueren Dramas* (Halle, 1893-1909, and not yet complete). Some of the best Miracles, Moralities, and Interludes are easily accessible in *Everyman with other Interludes* (Everyman's Library) and J. M. Manly's *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama* (Ginn & Co., 1897).

## CHAPTER III

### THE ELIZABETHAN THEATER

IN 1575 London had no theaters; that is, no building especially designed for the acting of plays. By 1600 there were at least six among which were some so large and beautiful as to arouse the equalized admiration of travelers from the continent.<sup>1</sup> It is the purpose of this chapter to give in outline the history of this rapid development of a new type of building; to describe, as accurately as may be, the general features of these theaters; and to indicate the influence which these features exerted upon the Shakespearean drama. But before doing this it is necessary to point out the causes which made the first Elizabethan theater what it was.

**The Predecessors of the Elizabethan Theater.**<sup>1</sup>—Of these, the most important was the innyard. As soon as the acting of plays ceased to be merely a local affair, as soon as there were companies of actors which traveled from town to town, it became necessary to find some place for the public presentation of plays other than the pageants of the guilds or the temporary scaffolds sometimes erected for miracle plays. Such a place was offered by the courtyard of an inn. The larger inns of

<sup>1</sup> Another predecessor, the great hall of a noble or a university, is mentioned in the section on the private theaters.

this period were, for the most part, built in the form of a quadrangle surrounding an open court. Opening directly off this court were the stables, the kitchen, and other offices of the inn; above these were from one to three stories of bedrooms and sitting rooms, entered from galleries running all round the court. When such a courtyard was used for theatrical performances, the actors erected a platform at one end to serve as a stage; the space back of this, shut off by a curtain, they used as a dressing room; and the part of the gallery immediately over the stage they employed as a second stage which could represent the walls of a city or the balcony of a house. In the courtyard the poorer class of spectators stood; in the galleries the more wealthy sat at their ease. These conditions made the innyards much better places for play acting than were the city squares, while they were given still another advantage from the actors' point of view by the fact that the easily controlled entrance gave an opportunity for charging a regular admission fee — a fee which varied with the desirability of the various parts of the house. Thus the innyards made no bad playhouses, and they continued to be used as such even after theaters were built.

They had, however, one obvious disadvantage; their long, narrow shape made a large number of the seats and a large proportion of the spaces available for standing room distinctly bad places from which to see what was happening on the stage. To remedy this defect, the builders of the theaters took a suggestion from the bull-baiting and bear-baiting rings. These rings, of which a considerable number already existed

in the outskirts of London, had been built for fights between dogs and bulls or bears, sports vastly enjoyed by the Elizabethans. The rings, like the innyards, had galleries in which spectators could sit and an open yard in which they could stand, and they possessed the added merit of being round. Very possibly these rings, like the Cornish rings used for miracle plays, originated in the stone amphitheaters built by the Romans during their occupation of Britain, buildings occasionally used, even in the sixteenth century, for the performance of plays. It is hardly necessary, nevertheless, to look farther than the bear ring to find the cause which determined the shape of the Elizabethan theater.

**The History of the Public Theaters. —**

then, James Burbage — the father of later the great actor manager of Sh — built the first London theater in not far outside the northern wall called simply the Theater. No theater, the Curtain, was soon put up from any curtain on the stage, but on the estate on which it was built. The Rose, was situated in another Surrey side of the Thames, where rings were. This was constructed, by Philip Henslowe, a prominent actor. Some time after 1594, a second theater was put up in this same region, commonly called Swan. The suitability of the Banbury theaters is still further attested by the burning of the Theater in the winter of 1598. The land on which the Theater

built had merely leased it to Burbage — who had since died, — and, when the lease expired, he attempted to raise the rent, probably believing that the Burbage heirs were receiving large profits from the building. Being unwilling to pay this increased rent, the Burbages took down the building, and reërected it on the Bankside, this time calling it the Globe. The last to be built of the great public theaters was the Fortune, which Henslowe erected in 1600. The situation of the Fortune outside Cripplegate, although a considerable distance west of the Curtain, was, roughly, that of the earlier theaters, the northern suburbs of the city.

They do not include all the theaters built or destroyed between 1576 and 1600, nor did such buildings include the Globe, for instance, which was built in 1613, — but the sketch is sufficient for our purposes. By the end of 1600 about twenty public theaters were open, and as we know, no important changes were made. The next real step — to do away altogether with this type of theater, did not come until after the Restoration.

— Before describing the buildings necessary to make one qualification. I shall speak of the 'Elizabethan theaters' as if there were one type to which all stages conformed. The Fortune was a great improvement over the Theater, and the evolution which could be traced in the Elizabethan theaters if we had the necessary evidence. Various theaters did not differ from the Fortune, and of our modern theaters do, they

still did differ in important points. For example, while the Globe and the Curtain were round, other theaters were hexagonal or octagonal, and the Fortune was square. Likewise, there were certainly differences in size. In spite of these facts, it is, however, still possible to describe the theaters, in general terms which are sufficiently accurate for our present purpose.

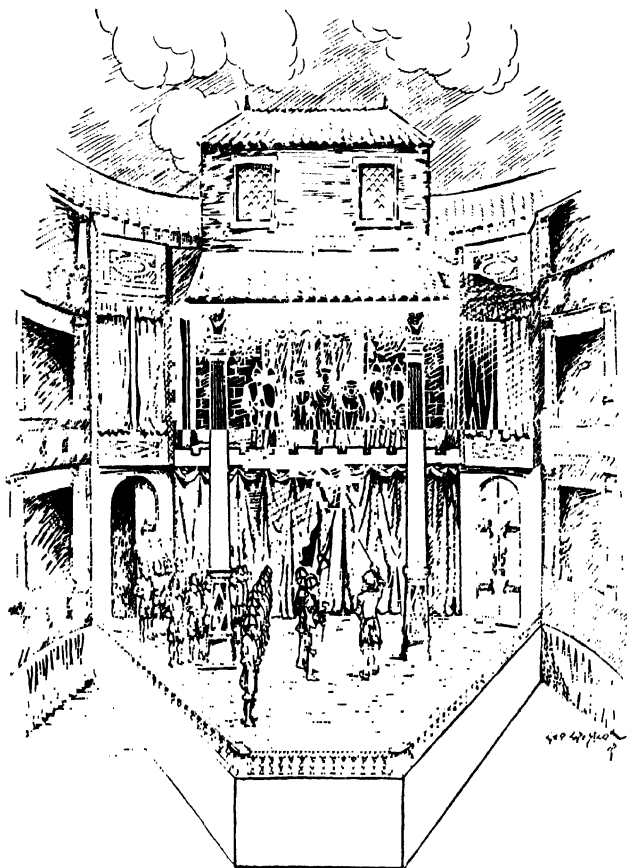
An Elizabethan theater was a three-story building of wooden or half-timber construction. The three stories formed three galleries for spectators. The first of these was raised a little above the level of the ground, while the yard, or 'pit,' in which the lower class of spectators stood, seems to have been somewhat sunken. The galleries were supported by oaken columns, often handsomely carved and ornamented. They were roofed and ceiled, but the yard was open to the weather. Although we know that the Fortune was eighty feet square outside, and that the yard within was fifty-five feet square, we are left in uncertainty about the seating capacity. From fifteen hundred to eighteen hundred is, however, the most convincing estimate. There were two boxes, or 'gentlemen's rooms,' the first balcony on either side of the stage. In these, there were other, cheaper boxes, and the balcony space was filled with seats. The seats were most comfortably cushioned. The theater was anything but the bare rude place which we often imagine it. Coryat, a widely-traveling man of the period, writes of the theaters in Venice that they were "bare as a paragon of our stately playhouses. Can their actors compare with ours?"

shows, or music." That this was no mere British prejudice is shown by the similar statements of foreigners traveling in England.

The most striking difference between Elizabethan and modern theaters was in the position of the stage, which was not back of a great proscenium frame, but was built out as a platform into the middle of the yard. At the Fortune, the stage was forty-three feet wide,—wider, that is, than most modern stages.<sup>1</sup> Jutting out from the level of the top gallery, and extending perhaps ten feet over the stage, was a square structure called the 'hut,' which rose above the level of the outside walls. Built out from the bottom of this, a roof, or 'shadow,' extended forward over a large part of the stage. The front of this 'shadow' was borne, in the better theaters, on two columns. The shadow and the hut, taken together, are often referred to as the 'heavens.'

**The Stage.**—When we turn from these general features of the theaters to the stage, we shall find it convenient to speak of a front and a rear stage, but not to imply any permanent line of demarcation between the two, or that they were not often used to divide the whole field of action. The rear stage is that part of the stage which could be shut off from the front by curtains; the other, that part of the stage which was in front of the curtains. In other words, the front stage is that portion of the stage which was in front of the yard, for the curtains continued the stage, and the rest of the house by the front

<sup>1</sup> In the theaters, the stage seems to have nar-



TIMON OF ATHENS, v. 4. OUTER SCENE.

*Trumpets sound. Enter Alcibiades with his  
 Powers before Athens.  
 "Alc. Sound to this Coward, and lascivious  
 Towne, Our terrible approach."  
 Sounds a party. The Senators appear upon  
 the Walls.*

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of the galleries. In both front and rear stages were traps out of which ghosts or apparitions could rise and into which such properties as the caldron in *Macbeth* could sink. From the 'heavens,' actors representing gods or spirits—as Jupiter in *Cymbeline* or Ariel in *The Tempest*—could be lowered by means of a mechanical contrivance.

The arrangement of the rear stage may have differed considerably in the various theaters, but the typical form may best be described as an alcove in front of which curtains could be drawn. This alcove was by no means so small as the word may seem to imply, but must have been about half as wide as the front stage and perhaps a quarter as deep. In its rear wall was a door through which the actors could enter without being seen when the curtains were drawn, and it seems to have had side doors as well. To the right and left of it were doors for such entrances to the front stage as could not properly be made through the curtains. This part of the stage was used for such scenes as the caves in *Cymbeline* or *The Tempest*, for the tomb in *Romeo and Juliet*, and for scenes in which characters concealed themselves behind the arras, as in *I Henry IV* or *Hamlet*. Since the front stage could not be concealed from the spectators, most heavy properties were placed on the back stage, so that this part of the stage was generally used for scenes which required such properties. For many of these scenes, however, both parts of the stage were used, the actors spreading out over the front stage soon after the beginning of the scene.

The space between the top of the back stage and the

heavens formed a balcony, like the balcony already described as part of the stage as arranged in the inn-yards. This balcony could also be curtained off when occasion required. To the right and left of it, over the doors leading to the front stage, some of the theaters had window-like openings, which were probably not in line with the balcony, but, like the doors below them, projected at an oblique angle. At one of these windows Jessica appeared in the second act of *The Merchant of Venice*; from the balcony Romeo took leave of Juliet. Thus the Elizabethan dramatist had three fields of action—a front, rear, and upper stage—which he could use singly, together, or in various combinations.

**Settings and Costumes.** — In order to understand the way in which this stage was utilized, the student must dismiss from his mind two widespread errors. The Elizabethan stage was by no means a bare, unfurnished platform, nor did the managers substitute for a setting placards reading "This is a Forest," or "This is a Bedroom." The difference between that age and this is not one between no settings and good ones; it is even possible to doubt whether Shakespeare's plays were not put on more effectively than in most of our modern theaters. The difference is one of principle, and even this difference may easily be exaggerated. When we say that Elizabethan stagings were 'symbolic,' whereas ours are pictorial, we mean that on the former the presence of a few selected objects suggested to the mind of the spectator all the others which go to make up the kind of scene presented. When a few trees were placed upon the stage, the audience supplied in

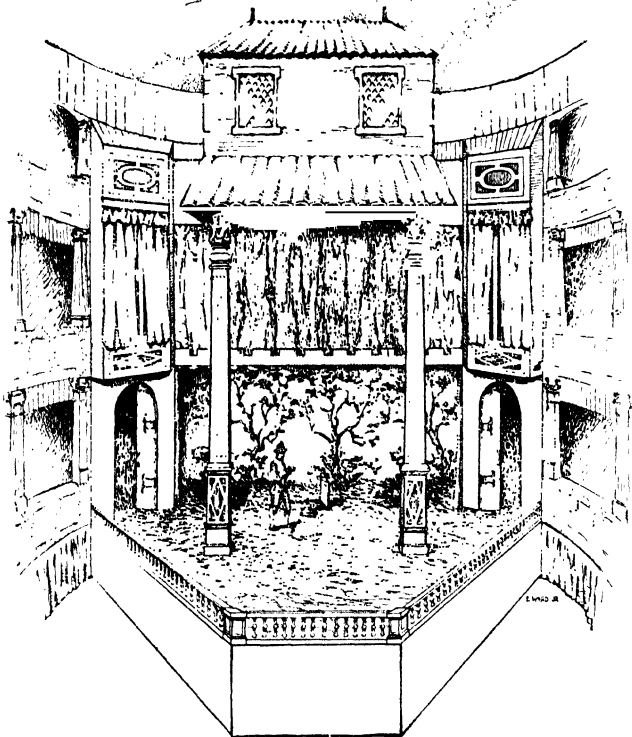
imagination the other objects that belong in a forest; when a throne was there, they saw with the mind's eye a room of state in a palace. But our modern stage also demands the help of the imagination. It is very far from presenting a completely realistic picture. We see three sides of a room and accept the room as complete, although none of us live in rooms which lack a side. We see a great cathedral painted on a back drop, and are hardly disturbed by the fact that an actor standing near it is twice as high as one of the doors. The difference between the two stages really simmers down to this: our symbols are of painted canvas, the Elizabethans' were of another sort. It is extremely unlikely that the Elizabethans used painted scenes in their public theaters. If they ever did, such 'painted cloths' were of the simplest sort, and not pictures painted in perspective. Instead, they relied for their effects upon solid properties—sometimes quite elaborate ones—such as trees, tombs, wells, beds, thrones, etc. These, as has been said, were usually set on the rear stage, although some of them, such as couches and banquet tables, were occasionally brought forward during the course of a scene.

There were, however, scenes which were acted without any setting. The Elizabethans did not feel it necessary to have every scene definitely localized. Consequently, many scenes which are described in our modern editions of Shakespeare as 'A Street,' 'A Place before the Castle,' etc., were not definitely assigned to any place, and were usually acted without settings on the front stage before the closed curtains. In order that no time should be lost while properties were

being changed, such scenes were commonly inserted between scenes requiring properties, so that a certain alternation between set and unset scenes resulted. The fourth act of the *Merchant of Venice*, for example, begins with the court-room scene, which demanded the whole stage, the properties for the court-room being set on the back stage, with perhaps some moved toward the front. The fifth act takes place in Portia's garden, which also took up the whole stage, with garden properties set on the rear stage. Between these two scenes comes the one in the street, which was acted before the closed curtains and required no properties. The arrangement is somewhat like that followed in many modern melodramas, where a scene not requiring properties is acted in front of a drop scene while scenery is being set behind. The raising of the drop—which corresponds to the opening of the Elizabethan curtains—not only reveals the setting behind, but also makes the whole stage, including that part which was in front of the drop, the scene of the action which follows.<sup>1</sup>

The costumes on Shakespeare's stage were very elaborate, but there was no desire to make them characteristic of any historical period. Indeed, the striving after historical accuracy of costume is so much a modern notion that it was nearly two centuries later when Macbeth and Julius Cæsar began to appear in costumes appropriate to their respective periods. On the other hand, there probably was some attempt to distinguish the dress of different nationalities. Some notion of how elaborate the costumes of Elizabethan actors were is given by the fact that Henslowe's

<sup>1</sup> With this whole paragraph, cf. Albright, pp. 81ff., and 104-105.



TIMON OF ATHENS, v. 3. INNER SCENE.

*Enter a Soldier in the Woods, seeking Timon.*  
*Sol* — Timon is dead, who hath out-stretch'd his  
 span,  
 Some Beast reads this: There do's not  
 live a Man.  
 Dead sure, and this his Grave, what's on  
 this Tomb."

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diary<sup>1</sup> has an entry of £4 14s. paid for a pair of hose, and £20 for a cloak. In connection with this it must be remembered that money was worth then about eight times what it is now, and that a playwright of the time rarely received more than £8 for a play. Another indication is given in Henslowe's list of the costumes belonging to the Lord Admiral's men, which included some eighty-seven garments, for the most part of silk or satin, ornamented with fringe and gold lace.

**The Private Theater.** — In the preceding sections the type of theater described has been referred to as 'public.' This has been done to distinguish it from the 'private' theater, a type which, although similar in so far as the general principles of staging employed are concerned, differed from the public theater in important particulars. The private theater is so called because it originated in the performances given before the invited guests of royalty, the nobility, or the universities. Since these performances were given in great halls, the type of theater which resulted was completely roofed, was lighted by candles, and had seats in the pit as well as in the galleries — when there were galleries. As soon as such theaters were built, admission was, of course, no longer by invitation, but the prices were so much higher than those of the public theaters that the audiences remained much more select. The first of these theaters was the Blackfriars, the remodeled hall of the former monastery of the Blackfriars, done over by Burbage in 1596. Others

<sup>1</sup> This memorandum book of Philip Henslowe, the great manager, is one of our chief sources of information about the Elizabethan theater.



were those in which the 'Children of Paul's' acted, the Cockpit, and the Salisbury Court. The Blackfriars was at first under royal patronage, the actors being the 'Children of the Chapel Royal.' These choir boys were carefully trained in acting and dancing as well as singing, and were subsidized by royalty, so that their performances tended to be much more spectacular than those of the public theaters. The performances at the Blackfriars seem to have retained this characteristic even after 1608, when Shakespeare's company took over the theater. Probably because of the patronage and interest of royalty, it was in the private theaters that painted scenes, already used in court masques, were first introduced. Thus these roofed theaters are really the forerunners, so far as England is concerned, of our modern playhouses.

**Effect of Stage Conditions on the Drama.** — When studied in the light of Elizabethan stage conditions, many characteristics of the plays written by Shakespeare and his contemporaries cease to be surprising or puzzling. A complete conception of all the effects which these conditions had upon the drama can only be gained by a careful study of all the plays. Here, moreover, we are obliged to pass over many points of more general character, such as the impossibility of representing night by darkness when the performances were given by daylight in a theater open to the sun. Two or three are, however, especially important. For instance, since it was possible to leave many scenes indefinitely localized, and since there was no necessity of long pauses for the change of heavy scenery, the dramatists were not limited as ours are to a compara-

tively small number of scenes. This was an advantage in that it gave great freedom and variety to the action ; but it was also a disadvantage in that it led to a scattering of effect and to looseness of construction. So in *Antony and Cleopatra* there are forty-two scenes, some of which are only a few lines long, and in consequence the play loses the intense, unified effect which it might otherwise have produced. Again, the absence of a front curtain made it impossible to end an act or play with a grand climax or an impressive tableau. Instead, the scenes gradually die away ; the actors leave the stage one by one, or go off in procession. Whether this was gain or loss is a debatable question. At any rate, this caused the Elizabethan plays to leave on the spectator an impression totally different from that left by ours. Finally, the absence of pictorial scenery forced the dramatists to use verbal description far more than is customary to-day. To this fact we owe some passages of poetry which are among the most beautiful in all dramatic literature.

**Theatrical Companies.** — During Shakespeare's lifetime there were in existence more or less continuously some twenty theatrical companies, at least four or five of which, during the greater part of this period, played contemporaneously in London. We have already seen how great nobles, before the end of the fifteenth century, maintained small companies of men as players of Interludes. When not wanted by their patrons, these men traveled about the country, and their example was followed by other groups whose legal position was a much less certain quantity. As a result, a law was passed in 1572 which required that

all companies of actors should be under the definite protection of some noble. As time went on, this relation became one of merely nominal patronage, but the companies continued to be known by the name of their patron. Thus the company to which Shakespeare belonged was known successively as Lord Strange's, the Earl of Derby's, first and second Lord Hunsdon's (or, because of the office which the Hunsdons held, as the Lord Chamberlain's), and as the King's company. At various times it appeared at the Theater, the Curtain, the Globe, and the Blackfriars, its greatest triumphs being associated with the Globe. By 1608, if not before, it was unquestionably the most successful company in London. It had the patronage of King James, and it controlled and acted in what were respectively the most popular public and private theaters, the Globe and the Blackfriars. When not acting in London, it made tours to other cities. Its number included several actors of well-known ability, among them Richard Burbage, the greatest tragic actor of the time.

The most formidable rivals to this company were the Admiral's men and the children's companies. The former company was managed by Richard Henslowe; had, after 1600, a permanent home in the Fortune theater; and included among its number Edward Alleyn, next to Burbage the most famous Elizabethan actor. The two great children's companies were those made up of the choir boys of the Chapel Royal and of St. Paul's. The former had begun to give dramatic performances as early as 1506. They were well trained, had the advantage of royal patronage, and were ex-

traordinarily popular, becoming very serious rivals of the men's companies. The performances of the Children of the Chapel Royal at the Blackfriars between 1596 and 1608 were the most fashionable in London. The children's companies were finally suppressed about 1609.

The members of the men's companies were divided into four classes: those who had shares in the house and in the company, those who had shares only in the company, hired actors, and apprentices. The third of these classes received a fixed salary, the last were cared for by the individual actors to whom they were apprenticed. The profits of the theaters were derived from entrance money and the additional fees received for the better seats. All of the first and half of the second was divided between the members of the first and second classes of shareholders. The members of the first received in addition shares in the other half of the additional fees.<sup>1</sup>

Because female parts were always taken by men or boys, it is sometimes assumed that Elizabethan acting must have been crude. On the contrary, we have every reason to believe that most parts, particularly the less important ones, were acted better than they are usually acted to-day. Some of the actors, such as Burbage and Alleyn, were undoubtedly men of great genius. All of them had the advantage of regular and consistent training—a thing only too often lacking in these days when an actor of ability is almost immediately made a 'star,' although he frequently knows pitifully little of the art of acting. One of the most interesting testimonies to the ability of Elizabethan actors is Ben

<sup>1</sup> For Shakespeare's share, cf. p. 15.

Jonson's tribute to the memory of the boy actor, Salathiel Pavy:—

" Weep with me, all you that read  
     This little story ;  
 And know, for whom a tear you shed  
     Death's self is sorry.  
 'Twas a child that so did thrive  
     In grace and feature,  
 As Heaven and Nature seem'd to strive  
     Which owned the creature.  
 Years he number'd scarce thirteen  
     When Fates turn'd cruel,  
 Yet three fill'd zodiacs had he been  
     The stage's jewel ;  
 And did act (what now we moan)  
     Old men so duly,  
 As sooth the Parcæ thought him one,  
     He play'd so truly.  
 So, by error, to his fate  
     They all consented ;  
 But, viewing him since, alas, too late !  
     They have repented ;  
 And have sought, to give new birth,  
     In baths to steep him ;  
 But, being so much too good for earth,  
     Heaven vows to keep him."

Many of the points discussed in this chapter are still the subject of controversy. The theories of the stage adopted here are, in general, those of V. E. Albright, *The Shakespearean Stage* (Macmillan, 1909). Among the numerous books and articles on these topics, the most useful are : G. F. Reynolds, *Some Principles of Elizabethan Staging* (*Modern Philology*, Vols. 3 and 4) ; Brodmeier, *Die Shakespeare Bühne* (Weimar, 1904) ; Fleay, *Chronicle History of the London Stage* (London, 1890) ; *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. by W. Greg (London, 1904) ; and the works of Creizenach and Schelling referred to in the preceding chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### ELIZABETHAN LONDON

**SHORTLY** after Shakespeare came to London, England demonstrated her new greatness to an astonished world; by the defeat of Spain's greatest fleet, the "invincible Armada," England showed herself as no longer a small island nation, but as Mistress of the Sea. In this victory culminated the growth which had begun under Henry VII, first of Tudor sovereigns. Naval supremacy was, however, but a sign of a much greater and more far-reaching transformation — a transformation which had affected science, literature, and religion, and one which filled the men of Shakespeare's time with such enthusiasm for the past, such confidence in the present, and such hope for the future, as has hardly been paralleled in the world's history.

During the century which had elapsed since 1485, Copernicus's discovery that the sun and not the earth was the center of our universe, had revolutionized the map of the heavens, as Columbus's discovery of America had revolutionized the map of the world. Thus stimulated, scientific investigation started afresh, working in accordance with the modern methods formulated by Francis Bacon, while voyage quickly followed voyage, each new discovery adding fuel to the fire of enthusiasm. Wonderful tales of new lands and unimagined wealth spread from mouth to mouth. The voyages

of Martin Frobisher, Anthony Hawkins, and Francis Drake opened new worlds, not only to English imagination, but also to English trade. It was they and men like them who gave to England her unexpected naval and commercial supremacy.

The latter was partly a result of the former. Elizabeth's victories over foreign enemies strengthened her power at home, and assured that freedom from internal discord which is essential to commercial prosperity. No sovereign distracted by danger from without could have mastered the factions which had sprung up within. The great religious movement known as the Protestant Reformation had not stopped in England with the separation of the English from the Roman Church under Henry VIII. It had brought into existence the Puritan, austere, bigoted, opposed to beauty of church and ceremonial, yet filled with superb moral and religious enthusiasm. It had brought about the persecution of Catholics and the still more merciless persecution of Protestants during the Catholic reaction under Queen Mary. Its successes, which began again with Elizabeth's reign, gave occasion for continual intrigues of Catholic emissaries. It all but plunged the nation into civil war, a war averted only by the victory over Spain and by the statesmanship of Elizabeth. Freed from the fear of war, however, Puritan and Churchman, each in his own way, could apply his enthusiasm to the works of peace.

With the return of peace and security, moreover, England first felt the full effect of the literary Renaissance. The revival of classical learning had already transformed the art and literature of the continent,

especially that of Italy. When, therefore, England turned again to the classics, it turned also to the Italian culture and literature to which the Renaissance had given birth, and from these sources English literature received new beauty of thought and form.

It was, then, in a new England that Shakespeare lived, an England intensely proud of the past which had made the present possible, an England rich enough and secure enough to have leisure and interest for literature, an England so vigorous, so confident, that it could not fail to bring out all that was latent in its greatest genius.

**The City of London.** — All this enthusiasm and activity reached its highest point in London. Even more than now, London was the center of influence, the place to which the greatest abilities were irresistibly attracted, and in which their greatest work was done. But the London of Shakespeare's time was vastly different from the London of to-day. On all sides, except that washed by the Thames, the mediæval walls were still standing and served as the city's actual boundary. Outside them were several important suburbs, but where now houses extend for miles in unbroken ranks, there were then open fields and pleasant woods. The total population of the city hardly exceeded a hundred thousand, while that of the suburbs, including the many guests of the numerous inns, amounted to perhaps a hundred thousand more. Hence, although there undoubtedly was crowding in the poorer quarters, London was a much more open city than it is to-day. The great houses all had their gardens, and a few minutes walk in any direction brought one to open country.



Westminster, now well within the greater London, was then only the most important suburb. Here was the Hall in which Parliament met, and, not far away, Whitehall, the favorite London residence of the Queen. Attracted by the presence of royalty, many of the great nobles had built their houses in this quarter, so that the north bank of the Thames from Westminster to the City was lined with stately buildings.

The Thames was London's pleasantest highway. It was then a clear, beautiful river spanned by a single bridge. If one wished to go from the City to Westminster, or even eastward or westward within the City itself, one could go most easily by boat. The Queen in her royal barge was often to be seen on the river. The great merchant companies had their splendid barges, in which they made stately progresses. One went by boat to the bear gardens and theaters on the south bank. Below the bridge, the river was crowded with shipping. At one of the wharves lay an object of universal interest, the *Golden Hind*, the ship in which Drake had made his famous voyage round the world.

Within the city, most of the streets were narrow, poorly paved, and worse lighted. Those who went about by night had their servants carry torches, called "links," before them, or hired boys to light them home. Such sanitation as existed was wretched, so that plagues and other diseases spread rapidly and carried off an appalling number of victims. The ignorance and inefficiency of the police is rather portrayed than satirized in Shakespeare's *Dogberry* and *Verges*. Such evils were common to all seventeenth-century cities, but these cities had their compensations in a freedom

and picturesqueness which have disappeared from our modern towns.

**The Citizens.** — In Elizabethan London, as in every city, the men who represented extremes of wealth and poverty, the courtiers and their imitators, the beggars and the sharpers, are those of whom we hear most; but the greater part of the population, that which controlled the city government, was of the middle class, sober, self-respecting tradespeople, inclined towards Puritanism, and jealous of their independence. Such people naturally distrusted and disliked the actors and their class, and used against them, as far as they could, the great authority of the city. In spite of court favor, the actors were compelled by city ordinances to build their theaters outside the city limits or on ground which the city did not control. Several attempts were made to suppress play acting altogether, ostensibly because of the danger that crowded audiences would spread the plague when it became epidemic. In spite of this official opposition, however, the sober citizens formed a goodly part of theater audiences until after the accession of King James, when the rising tide of Puritanism led to increased austerity. At no time were the majority of the citizens entirely free from a love for worldly pleasures. They swelled the crowds at the taverns, and their wives often vied with the great ladies of court in extravagance of dress.

**St. Paul's.** — The great meeting place of London was, oddly enough, the nave of St. Paul's Cathedral. This superb Gothic church, later destroyed by the Great Fire, was used as a common passageway, as a place for doing business and for meeting friends. In

the late morning hours, the men-about-town promenaded there, displaying their gorgeous clothes and hailing those whom they wished to have known as their acquaintances. If a gallant's cash were at low ebb, he loitered there, hoping for an invitation to dinner. If he had had a dinner, he often came back for another stroll in the afternoon. At one pillar he would find lawyers standing; at another, serving men seeking employment; at still another, public secretaries. Here one could learn anything from the latest fashion to the latest political scandal. Meanwhile, divine worship might be going on in the chancel, unobserved unless some fop wished to make himself conspicuous by joking with the choir boys. Thus St. Paul's was a school of life invaluable to the dramatist. We know that Ben Jonson learned much there, and we can hardly doubt that Shakespeare did likewise.

**The Taverns.** — Another center of London life was the tavern. The man who would now lunch at his club then dined at an 'ordinary,' a *table d'hôte* in some tavern. Men dined at noon, and then sat on over their wine, smoking or playing at cards or dice. In the evening one could always find there music and good company. One tradition of Shakespeare tells of his evenings at the Mermaid tavern. "Many were the wit-combates," writes Fuller, "betwixt him [Shakespeare] and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great gallion, and an English man of War; Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in Learning; Solid, but Slow in his performances. Shake-spear, with the English man-of-War, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides,

tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his Wit and Invention." Francis Beaumont, the dramatist, wrote the following verses to Ben Jonson : —

“ What things have we seen  
Done at the Mermaid, heard words that have been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
As if everyone from whence they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life ; then when there hath been thrown  
Wit able enough to justify the town  
For three days past ; wit that might warrant be  
For the whole city to talk foolishly  
Till that were cancelled ; and when that was gone,  
We left an air behind us, which alone  
Was able to make the two next companies  
(Right witty, though but downright fools) more wise.”

**At the Theater.** — Having dined, the Elizabethan gentleman often visited one of the numerous bookshops, or else went to the theater, perhaps to the Globe. In the latter case, since this theater was on the south bank of the Thames, he was most likely to cross the river by boat. A flag, floating from a turret over the theater, announced a performance there. The prices paid for admission varied, but the regular price for entrance to the Globe seems to have been a penny (about fifteen cents in the money of to-day). This, however, gave one only the right to stand in the pit or, perhaps, to sit in the top gallery. For a box the price was probably a shilling (equivalent to two dollars), the poorer seats costing less. At the aristocratic Blackfriars, sixpence (one dollar) was the low-

est price. At this theater, the most fashionable occupied seats on the stage, where they were at once extremely conspicuous and in the way of the actors ; but this custom probably did not spread to the Globe before 1603. At the Blackfriars, too, one could have a seat in the pit, while at the Globe the pit was filled with a standing, jostling crowd of apprentices and riffraff. In the theater every one was talking, laughing, smoking, buying oranges, nuts, wine, or cheap books from shouting venders, just as is done in some music halls to-day. Once the trumpet had sounded for the third time, indicating the beginning of the performance, a reasonable degree of quiet was restored, until a pause in the action let the uproar burst forth anew. At an Elizabethan theater there were no pauses for shifting scenes. Consequently the few introduced were determined either by convention or by breaks in the action. At the Blackfriars and more aristocratic theaters, there was music between the acts, but at the Globe this was not customary until a comparatively late date, if ever.

An audience like that at the Globe, made up of all sorts and conditions of men from the highest nobility to the lowest criminal, was, quite naturally, not easy to please as a whole. Yet, after all, the Elizabethans were less critical in some respects than we are. Although many comparatively cheap books were published, reading had not then become a habit, and a good plot was not the less appreciated because it was old. The audiences did, however, demand constant variety, so that plays had short runs, and most dramatists were forced to pay more attention to quantity

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SEQUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

THE most profitable method of studying any writer is to take up his works in the order in which they were written. More and more this method is being adopted toward all authors, ancient and modern, Virgil or Milton, Dante or Tennyson. We are thus enabled to trace the gradual growth of the poet's mind from one production to another, — his constant increase in skill, in judgment, in knowledge of mankind. The great characteristic of the genius is, not simply that he knows more than other men at first, but that he has in him such vast possibilities of growth, of improving with time, and learning by his own mistakes. Consequently, it is very important to know that a certain play or poem is faulty because it was its author's first crude attempt; that a second is better because it was written five years later in the light of added experience; and that a third is better still because it came ten years after the second, at the climax of the writer's powers.

Besides showing the author's growth, this method also shows his relation to the great literary movements of his time. As fashions in dress and sports keep shifting, fashions in literature are changing just as constantly, and the dominant type may alter two or

three times during one man's life. If an author changes to meet these demands, it is important to know that one of his plays was merry comedy because written at a time when merry comedies filled all the playhouses; and that another is sober tragedy because composed while most of the theaters were acting and demanding sober tragedy.

Now Shakespeare not only improved a great deal while composing his plays, but also conformed, to some extent at least, to the different tastes of his audience at different periods of his life. Hence, a knowledge of the order in which his plays were written is very valuable, and should form the first step in a careful study of his writings.

Unfortunately, when we attempt to arrange Shakespeare's plays in chronological order, we encounter many practical difficulties in finding just what this order is. We know that Tennyson developed a great deal as a poet between the ages of eighteen and thirty-three; and we can show this by pointing to four successive volumes of his poems, published respectively at the ages of eighteen, twenty-one, twenty-three, and thirty-three, and each rising in merit above the one before it. We know definitely in what order these volumes come, for we find on the title-page of each the date when it was printed. But scarcely half of Shakespeare's plays were printed in this way during his life. The others, some twenty in all, are found only in one big folio volume which gives no hint of their proper order or year of composition, and which bears on its title-page the date of the printing, 1623, seven years after Shakespeare died. Many plays, too, published

early, were written some years before publication, so that the date of printing on the flyleaf of the quarto, even where a quarto exists, simply shows that the play was written sometime before that year but does not tell at all *how long* before. How, then, are we to trace Shakespeare's growth from year to year, through his successive dramas, when the quartos help us so little and when the majority of these dramas are piled before us in one volume by the editors of the First Folio, without a word of explanation as to which plays are early attempts and which mature work?

At first sight the above problem seems almost hopeless. The researches of scholars for over a century, however, have gathered together a mass of evidence which determines pretty accurately the order in which these different plays were written.

This evidence is of two kinds, *external* and *internal*. By external evidence we mean that found *outside* of the play, references to it in other books of the time, and similar material. By internal evidence we mean that found *inside* of the play itself.

**External Evidence.**—This is of several kinds. In the first place, every play which was to be printed had to be entered in the Stationers' Register, and all these entries are dated. Hence we know that certain plays were prepared for publication by the time mentioned. For instance, "A Book called Antony and Cleopatra" was entered May 20, 1608; and although apparently the book was not finally printed at that time, and although our only copy of *Antony and Cleopatra* is that in the Folio of 1623, yet we feel reasonably certain from this entry that this play must have been written either



in 1608 or earlier. In addition to the record of the Stationers' Register, we have the dates on the title-pages of such plays as appeared in Quarto. These evidences, it must be remembered, determine only the latest possible date for the play, as many were written long before they were printed, or even entered.

Again, other men sometimes used in their books expressions borrowed from Shakespeare or remarks which sound like allusions to something of his. Here, if we know the date of the other man's book, we learn that the play of Shakespeare from which he borrowed must have been in existence before that date. Thus, when the poet Barksted prints a poem in 1607 and borrows a passage in it from *Measure for Measure*, we conclude that *Measure for Measure* must have been produced before 1607, or Barksted could not have copied from it. This form of evidence has its dangers, since occasionally we cannot tell whether Shakespeare borrowed from the other man or the other man from him; nevertheless it is often valuable.

Furthermore, we sometimes find in contemporary books or papers, which are dated, an account of the acting of some play. A law student named John Manningham left a diary in which he records that on February 2, 1602 he saw a play called *Twelfth Night or What You Will* in the Hall of the Middle Temple; and his account of the play shows that it was Shakespeare's. Dr. Simon Forman, in a similar diary, describes the performance of three Shakespearean plays, two of the accounts being dated. Still more important in this class is the famous allusion, already quoted, by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, a

book published in 1598. In this he mentions with high praise six comedies of Shakespeare: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Love's Labour's Won*,<sup>1</sup> *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Merchant of Venice*; and six "tragedies": *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>2</sup> Hence, we know that all these plays were written and acted somewhere before 1598, although three of them did not appear in print until 1623.

The above list does not exhaust all the forms of external evidence, but merely shows its general nature. External evidence, as can be seen, is not something mysterious and peculiar, but simply an application of common sense to the problem in hand.

Frequently two pieces of external evidence will accomplish what neither one could do alone. Often one fact will show that a play came somewhere before a certain date, but not show how long before, and another will prove that the play came after another date, without telling how long after. For example, *King Lear* was written before 1606, for we have a definite statement that it was performed then. It was written after 1603, for it borrowed material from a book printed in that year. This method of hemming in a play between its earliest and its latest possible date is common and useful, both with Shakespeare and with other writers.

**Internal Evidence.**—By the above methods a few plays have been dated quite accurately, and many others confined between limits only two or three years

<sup>1</sup> This play is either lost, or preserved under another title.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in full in Chapter I, p. 10.

apart. But many plays are still dated very vaguely, and some are not dated at all. For further results we must fall back on internal evidence. The first, though by no means the most important, form of this consists of allusions *within the play to contemporary events*. If a boy should read in an old diary of his grandmother's that she had just heard of the fight at Gettysburg, he would feel certain that the words were written a few days after that great battle, even if there were no date anywhere in the manuscript. In the same way, when the Prologue of Shakespeare's *Henry V* alludes to the fact that Elizabeth's general (the Earl of Essex) is in Ireland quelling a rebellion, we know that this was written between April and September of 1599, the period during which Essex actually was in Ireland. Similarly, certain details in *The Tempest* appear to have been borrowed from accounts of the wreck of Sir George Somers's ship in 1609. As Shakespeare could not have borrowed from these accounts before they existed, he must have written his comedy sometime after 1609.<sup>1</sup>

But the main form of internal evidence, what is usually meant by that term, is the testimony in the character and style of the plays themselves as to the maturity of the man who wrote them. Just as the stump of a tree sawn across shows its age by its successive rings of growth, so a poem, if carefully

<sup>1</sup> This form of evidence is usually weak and unreliable. Most of the supposed allusions are much more vague than the two given. Where there have been similar events in history, the allusion might be to one which we had forgotten when we thought it was to a similar one which we knew.

examined, shows the rings of growth in the author's style of thought and expression.

The simplest and most tangible form of this evidence is that which is found in meter. If we read in order of composition those plays which we have already succeeded in dating, we shall find certain habits of versification steadily growing on the author, as play succeeded play.

In the first place, most of the lines in the early plays are 'end-stopped'; that is, the sense halts at the close of each line with a resulting pause in reading. In the later plays the sense frequently runs over from one line into another, producing what is called a 'run-on' line instead of an 'end-stopped' one. By comparing the following passages, the first of which contains nothing but end-stopped lines and the second several run-on lines, the reader can easily see the difference.

(a) From an early play : —

" I from my mistress come to you in post :  
If I return, I shall be post indeed,  
For she will score your fault upon my pate.  
Methinks your maw, like mine, should be your clock,  
And strike you home without a messenger."

— *Comedy of Errors*, I, ii, 63-67.

(b) From a late play : —

" Mark your divorce, young sir, [end-stopped]  
Whom son I dare not call. Thou art too base [run-on]  
To be acknowledg'd. Thou, a sceptre's heir, [end-stopped]  
That thus affects a sheep-hook ! Thou old traitor,  
[end-stopped]

I am sorry that by hanging thee I can [run-on]  
 But shorten your life one week. And thou, fresh piece  
 [run-on]  
 Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know  
 [end-stopped]  
 The royal fool thou cop'st with . . . —"

— *Winter's Tale*, IV, iv, 427-434.

Since Shakespeare keeps constantly increasing his use of run-on lines in plays for which dates are known, it seems reasonable to assume that he did this in all his work, that it was a habit which grew on him from year to year. Hence, if we sort out his plays in order, putting those with the fewest run-on lines first and those with the greatest number last, we shall have good reason for believing that this represents roughly the order in which they were written.

A second form of metrical evidence is found in the proportion of 'masculine' and 'feminine' endings in the verse. A line has a masculine ending when its last syllable is stressed; when it ends, for example, on words or phrases like *behold'*, *control'*, *no more'*, *begone'*. On the other hand, if the last stressed syllable of the line is followed by an unstressed one, the two together are called a feminine ending. Instances of this would be lines ending in such words or phrases as, *unho'/ly*, *forgive' /me*, *benight'/ed*. Notice the difference between them in the following passage:—

" Our revels now are ended. These our actors [feminine]  
 As I foretold you, were all spirits, and [masculine]  
 Are melted into air, into thin air; [masculine]  
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision, [feminine]  
 The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, [feminine]

The solemn temples, the great globe itself, [masculine]  
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, [masculine]  
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, [feminine]  
 Leave not a rack behind."

— *Tempest*, IV, i, 147-156.

In the main, although with some exceptions, the number of feminine endings, like the number of run-on lines, increases as the plays become later in date.

A third form of ending, which practically does not appear at all in the early plays, and which recurs with increasing frequency in the later ones, is what is called a 'weak ending.'<sup>1</sup> This occurs whenever a run-on line ends in a word which according to the meter needs to be stressed, and according to the sense ought not to be. Here there is a clash between meter and meaning, and the reader compromises by making a pause before the last syllable instead of emphasizing the syllable itself. Below are two examples of weak endings:—

"It should the good ship so have swallowed, *and*  
 The fraughting souls within her."

"I will rend an oak  
 And peg thee in his knotty entrails *till*  
 Thou hast howled away twelve winters."

Lastly, we have the evidence of rime. Run-on lines, feminine endings, and weak endings constantly increase as Shakespeare grows older. Rime, on the other hand, in general decreases. The early plays are

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ingram makes a distinction between "light" and "weak" endings. Both are classed together as weak endings above. The distinction seems to us too subtle for any but professional students.

full of it; the later ones have very little. It does not follow that the chronological order of the individual plays could be exactly determined by their percentage of riming lines, for subject matter makes a great difference. In a staged fairy story, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the poet would naturally fall into couplets. But, other things being equal, a large amount of rime is always a sign of early work. This is especially true when the rimes occur, not in pairs, but in quatrains or sonnet forms, or (as they sometimes do in the first comedies) in scraps of sing-song doggerel.

Such is the internal evidence from the various changes in versification. Its value, as must always be remembered, lies in the fact that the results of these different tests in the main agree with each other and with such external evidence as we have.

Then, wholly aside from metrical details, there is a large amount of internal evidence of other kinds,—evidence which cannot be measured by the rule of thumb, but which every intelligent reader must notice. We feel instinctively that one play mirrors the views and emotions of youth, another those of middle age. A man's face does not change more between twenty-five and forty than his mind changes during the same interval; and the difference between his thoughts at those periods is as distinct often as the difference between the rounded lines of youth and the stern features of middle age. This is a subject which will be better understood in the light of the next chapter.

**The Order of the Plays.** — Upon such evidence as has been described, a list of Shakespeare's plays in their

chronological order can now be presented. The details of evidence on date may be found in the account of the plays which appears in Chapters X-XIII.

Love's Labour's Lost . . . . .	1590-1591
The Comedy of Errors . . . . .	1590-1591
II and III Henry VI . . . . .	1590-1592
Richard III . . . . .	1592-1593
Two Gentlemen of Verona . . . . .	1592
King John . . . . .	1592-1593
Richard II . . . . .	1593-1594
Titus Andronicus . . . . .	1593-1594
Midsummer Night's Dream . . . . .	1593-1595
Romeo and Juliet . . . . .	1591, revised 1597
The Merchant of Venice . . . . .	1594-1596
The Taming of the Shrew . . . . .	1596-1597
I Henry IV . . . . .	1597
II Henry IV . . . . .	1598
Henry V . . . . .	1599
Merry Wives of Windsor . . . . .	1599
Much Ado about Nothing . . . . .	1599
As You Like It . . . . .	1599-1600
Julius Cæsar . . . . .	1599-1601
Twelfth Night . . . . .	1601
Troilus and Cressida . . . . .	1602
All's Well That Ends Well . . . . .	1602
Hamlet . . . . .	1602, 1603-1604 (two versions).
Measure for Measure . . . . .	1603
Othello . . . . .	1604
King Lear . . . . .	1604-1605
Macbeth . . . . .	1605-1606
Antony and Cleopatra . . . . .	1607-1608
Timon of Athens . . . . .	1607-1608
Pericles . . . . .	1608
Coriolanus . . . . .	1609
Cymbeline . . . . .	1610
The Winter's Tale . . . . .	1610-1611



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The Tempest . . . . .	1611
King Henry the Eighth . . . . .	1612-1613

Among the many books and articles on the subject of this chapter, the following may be mentioned: *Shakespeare Manual* by F. L. Fleay (Macmillan and Co., London, 1876); *Shakespeare*, by E. Dowden (American Book Co., New York); *Cartæ Shakespearianæ* by D. Sambert.

## CHAPTER VII

### SHAKESPEARE'S DEVELOPMENT AS A DRAMATIST

As the reader will remember, our main aim in attempting to date Shakespeare's plays was to trace through them his development as a dramatist and poet. Just as the successive chambers of the nautilus shell show the stages of growth of its dead and vanished tenant, so the plays of Shakespeare show how

"Each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut him from heaven with a dome more vast."

The great thing which distinguishes the genius from the ordinary man, we repeat, is his power of constant improvement; and we can trace this improvement here from achievements less than those of many a modern writer up to the noblest masterpieces of all time.

Much of the material connected with this development has already been discussed in another connection under Internal Evidence. Internal evidence, however, that one play is later than another, is nothing else than the marks of intellectual growth in the poet's mind between those two dates. We arrange the plays in order according to indications of intellectual growth, just as one could fit together again the broken fragments of a nautilus shell, guided by the relative size of the ever expanding chambers. So, in

discussing Shakespeare's development, we must bring up much old material, examining it from a different point of view.

**Meter.** — In the first place, the poet develops wonderfully in the command of his medium of expression; that is, in his mastery of meter. What is meant by the fact that as Shakespeare grew older, wiser, more experienced, he used more run-on lines, more weak endings, more feminine endings? Simply this, that by means of these devices he gained more variety and expressiveness in his verse. A passage from his early work (in spite of much that is fine) with every ending alike masculine and strong, and with every line end-stopped, harps away tediously in the same swing, like one lonely instrument on one monotonous note. His later verse, on the other hand, with masculine and feminine endings, weak ones and strong, end-stopped and run-on lines, continually relieving each other, is like the blended music of a great orchestra, continually varying, now stern, now soft, in harmony with the thought it expresses. Below are given two passages, the first from an early play, the second from a late one. In print one may look as well as the other; but if one reads them aloud, he will see in a moment how much more variety and expressiveness there is in the second, especially for the purposes of acting.

“Urge not my father's anger, Eglamour,  
 But think upon my grief, a lady's grief,  
 And on the justice of my flying hence,  
 To keep me from a most unholy match,  
 Which heaven and fortune still rewards with plagues.  
 I do desire thee, even from a heart

As full of sorrows as the sea of sands,  
To bear me company and go with me ;  
If not, to hide what I have said to thee,  
That I may venture to depart alone."

— *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV, iii, 27–36.

"By whose aid,  
Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimm'd  
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,  
And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault  
Set roaring war ; to the dread rattling thunder  
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak  
With his own bolt ; the strong-bas'd promontory  
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up  
The pine and cedar ; graves at my command  
Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth  
By my so potent art. But this rough magic  
I here abjure, and, when I have requir'd  
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,  
To work mine end upon their senses that  
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,  
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,  
And deeper than did ever plummet sound  
I'll drown my book."

— *Tempest*, V, i, 40–57.

The same reason shows why Shakespeare used less and less rime as his taste and experience ripened. Rime is a valuable ornament for songs and lyric poetry generally ; but from poetry which is actually to be acted on the English stage it takes away the most indispensable of all qualities, the natural, life-like tone of real speech. Notice this in the difference between the two extracts below. Observe how stilted and artificial the first one seems ; and see how the second combines the melody and dignity of poetry with the simple naturalness of living language.

“This fellow pecks up wit as pigeons pease,  
 And utters it again when God doth please.  
 He is wit's pedler, and retails his wares  
 At wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs ;  
 And we that sell by gross, the Lord doth know,  
 Have not the grace to grace it with such show.  
 This gallant pins the wenches on his sleeve ;  
 Had he been Adam, he had tempted Eve.”

— *Love's Labour's Lost*, V, ii, 315-322

“I was not much afeard ; for once or twice  
 I was about to speak and tell him plainly  
 The self-same sun that shines upon his court  
 Hides not his visage from our cottage, but  
 Looks on all alike. Will't please you, sir, be gone ?  
 I told you what would come of this. Beseech you,  
 Of your own state take care. This dream of mine —  
 Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,  
 But milk my ewes and weep.”

— *Winter's Tale*, IV, iv, 452-460.

I do not mean to imply by the above that Shakespeare's early verse is poor according to ordinary standards. It is not; it contains much that is fine. But it is far inferior to his later work, and it is inferior in those very details which time and experience alone can teach.

An important point to remember is that while Shakespeare was growing in metrical skill, he was not growing alone. A crowd of other authors around him were developing in a similar way; and he was learning from them and they from him. The use of blank verse in English when Shakespeare began to write was a comparatively new practice, and, like all new inventions, for a time it was only imperfectly understood. Men

had to learn by experiments and by each other's successes and failures, just as men in recent years have learned to fly. Shakespeare surpassed all the others, as the Wright brothers in their first years surpassed all their fellow-aëronauts; but like the Wright brothers he was only part of a general movement. No other man changed as much as he in one lifetime, but the whole system of dramatic versification was changing.

**Taste.** — But wholly aside from questions of meter, Shakespeare improved greatly in taste and judgment between the beginning and middle of his career. This is shown especially in his humor. To the young man humor means nothing but the cause for a temporary laugh; to a more developed mind it becomes a pleasant sunshine that lingers in the memory long after reading, and interprets all life in a manner more cheerful, sympathetic, and sane. The early comedies give us nothing but the temporary laugh; and even this is produced chiefly by fantastic situations or plays on words, clever but far-fetched, puns and conceits so overworked that their very cleverness jars at times. On the other hand, in the great humorous characters of his middle period, like Falstaff and Beatrice, the poet is opening up to us new vistas of quiet, lasting amusement and indulgent knowledge of our imperfect but lovable fellow-men.

The same growth of taste is shown in the dramatist's increasing tendency to tone down all revolting details and avoid flowery, overwrought rhetoric. Nobody knows whether Shakespeare wrote all of *Titus Andronicus* entire or simply revised it; but we feel sure that the older Shakespeare would have been unwilling, even as

a reviser, to squander so much that is beautiful on such an orgy of blood and violence. *Romeo and Juliet* is full of beautiful poetry; but even here occasional lapses show the undeveloped taste of the young writer. Notice the flowery and fantastic imagery in the following passage, where Lady Capulet is praising Paris, her daughter's intended husband: —

“Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face  
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen;  
Examine every married lineament  
And see how one another lends content,  
And what obscur'd in this fair volume lies  
Find written in the margent of his eyes.  
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,  
To beautify him, only lacks a cover.  
The fish lives in the sea, and 'tis much pride  
For fair without the fair within to hide.  
That book in many's eyes doth share the glory,  
That in gold clasps locks in the golden story.”

— *Romeo and Juliet*, I, iii, 81-92.

If we try to picture to ourselves the post-wedlock edition of Paris described above, we shall see how a young man's imagination may run away with his judgment. There are passages in this play as good, perhaps, as anything which the author ever wrote; but if we compare such fantastic imagery with the uniform excellence of the later masterpieces, we shall see how much Shakespeare unlearned and outgrew.

**Character Study.** — Still more significant is the poet's development in the conception of character. In no other way, probably, does an observant mind change and expand so much as in this. For the infant all men fall into two very simple categories: — people whom he likes

and people whom he doesn't. The boy of ten has increased these two classes to six or eight. The young man of twenty finds a few more, and begins to suspect that men who act alike may not have the same motives and emotions. But as the keen-eyed observer nears middle age, he begins to realize that no two souls are exact duplicates of each other; and that behind every human eye there lies an undiscovered country, as mysterious, as fascinating, as that which Alice found behind the looking-glass,—a country like, and yet unlike, the one we know, where dreams grow beautiful as tropic plants, and passions crouch like wild beasts in the jungle.

Great as he was, Shakespeare had to learn this lesson like other men; but he learned it much better. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, generally considered his earliest play, he has not led us into the inner selves of his men and women at all, has not seemed to realize that they possess inner selves. At the conclusion we know precisely as much of them as we should if we had met them at a formal reception, and no more. The princess is pretty and clever on dress parade; but how does the real princess feel when parade is over and she is alone in her chamber? The later Shakespeare might have told us, did tell us, in regard to more than one other princess; but the young Shakespeare has nothing to tell.

*Richard III*, which is supposed to have come some three years later, is a marked advance in characterization, but still far short of the goal. Here the dramatist attempts, indeed, to analyze the tyrant's motives and emotions; but he does not yet understand what



he is trying to explain, and for that reason the being whom he creates is portentous, but not human. To understand this, you need only compare Richard with Macbeth. In Macbeth we have a host of different forces—ambition, superstition, poetry, remorse, vacillation, affection, despair—all struggling together as they might in you or me; and it is this mingling of feelings with which we all can sympathize that makes him, in spite of all his crimes, a human being like ourselves. But in Richard there is no human complexity. His is the fearful simplicity of the lightning, the battering-ram, the earthquake, forces whose achievements are terrible and whose inner existence a blank. Richard hammers his bloody way through life like the legendary Iron Man with his flail, awe-inspiring as a destructive agency, not as a human being.

Two or three years later we find Shakespeare in his conception of Shylock capable of greater things as a student of character. In this pathetic, lonely, vindictive figure, exiled forever from the warm fireside of human friendship by those inherent faults which he can no more change than the tiger can change his claws, the long tragedy which accompanies the survival of the fittest finds a voice. Yet even in Shylock the dramatist has not reached his highest achievement in character study. The old Jew is drawn splendidly to the life, but he is a comparatively easy character to draw, a man with a few simple and prominent traits. Depicting such a man is like drawing a pronounced Roman profile, less difficult to do, and less satisfactory when done, than tracing the subdued curves of a more evenly rounded face. Still greater will be the triumph

when Shakespeare can draw equally true to life a many-sided man or woman, in whose single heart all our different experiences find a sympathetic echo.

And this final triumph is not long in coming. Between his thirty-fourth and thirty-eighth years, in Falstaff and Hamlet the poet produced the greatest comic and the greatest tragic character of dramatic history. The man who has read *Hamlet* understandingly has found in the young prince a lifelong companion. Has he been unjustly treated? Hamlet, too, had suffered and hated. Has he loved? So had Hamlet. Has he had a bosom friend? The most sacred and beautiful of college friendships was that between Hamlet and Horatio. Has he been bored by some stupid old adviser? So had Hamlet by Polonius and similar "tedious old fools." Has he been thrilled by some beautiful landscape? Hamlet, too, had admired "this goodly frame, the earth" and the sky, "that majestic roof fretted with golden fire." Has he had a parent whom he loved and admired? So had Hamlet in his father. Has he had a friend for whom his love was mixed with shame? So felt Hamlet toward his mother. Has he felt the pride of a great deed bravely accomplished? So did Hamlet in dying. Has he felt the shame and remorse of a duty unperformed? So did Hamlet while his father was still unrevenged. Has he shuddered at the mystery of death? So had Hamlet shuddered at "that undiscovered country." Or has he been racked, as all good men are in practical life, by the doubt as to what *is* his duty? So had Hamlet been racked by the same terrible responsibility. And thus we might go on indefinitely. The

experience of a lifetime is packed into this play. Shakespeare never surpassed *Hamlet*, though he wrote for nine or ten years after; but when he had once reached this high level, he maintained it, with only occasional lapses, to the end.

**Dramatic Technique.** — Lastly, Shakespeare developed greatly in dramatic technique. By dramatic technique we mean the method in which the machinery of the story is handled. The dramatist, to do his duty properly, must accomplish at least five things at once. He must make his play lifelike and natural; he must keep his hearers well informed as to what is happening; he must bring in different events after each other in rapid succession to hold the interest of his audience; he must make the different characters influence each other so that the whole becomes one connected story, not several unrelated ones; and he must make the audience feel that the play is working toward a certain inevitable end, must bring it to that end, and must then stop. The lack of any one of these factors may make a play either dull or disappointing. It takes ability to get any one of these alone. It takes years of training before even a born genius can work them all in together. Of course, these details are much easier to handle in dramatizing some subjects than others; and we find Shakespeare succeeding comparatively early in easy subjects and making mistakes later in harder ones; but, on the whole, in dramatic technique as in other things, his history is one of increasing power and judgment.

Here, again, as in his metrical development, Shakespeare was merely one leading figure in a popular

movement. Through a long evolution the English drama had just come into existence when he began to write. There were no settled theories about this new art, no results of long experience such as lie at the service of the modern dramatist. All men were experimenting, and Shakespeare among the rest.

His early play of *Love's Labour's Lost* has already been used to illustrate lack of characterization. In technique, also, in spite of many marks of natural brilliance, it shows the faults of the beginner. The story in the first three acts does not move on fast enough; there is a lack of that rapid series of connected events which we mentioned above and which adds so much to the interest of the later plays, like *Macbeth*. Likewise, the characters in the prose underplot (except Costard) have too little connection with the story of the king and his friends. In very badly constructed plays this lack of connection sometimes goes so far that the main and under plots seem like two separate serial stories in a magazine, in which the reader alternates from one to the other, but never thinks of them as one. This obviously is bad, for just when the reader is most interested in one, he is interrupted and has to lay it aside for the other. No play of Shakespeare's errs so far as that; but the defect in *Love's Labour's Lost* is similar in a very modified form. Neither is this comedy as successful as the author's later plays in preparing us for a certain ending as the inevitable outcome and then placing that ending before us. We are led to expect that all four love affairs must be successful, and shall feel disappointed if the sympathetic dreams which we have woven around that idea

are not satisfied. Yet the play ends hurriedly in a way which leaves us all in doubt, and disappointed, like guests who have been invited to a wedding and find it indefinitely postponed. There is a wonderful amount of clever dialogue in this comedy, but its structure shows how much the author had yet to learn.

*The Two Gentleman of Verona*, probably written a little later, shows improvement, but by no means perfect mastery. The first two acts still drag, although the play moves more rapidly when it is under way. The inability to lead up naturally to an inevitable end still persists. The young author, well as he has managed the middle of the play, does not wait for events to take their logical course. He winds up everything abruptly like a man who has just changed his mind or become tired of his task, and marries the most lovable girl in the play to a rascal who is scarcely given time for even a pretense of reformation.

*The Merchant of Venice*, two or three years later, shows a great advance in technique as in other ways. Notice how skillfully the dramatist makes the different characters all influence each other's lives, so that the interest in one becomes the interest in all. There is one story in the relations of Shylock and Antonio, another in the love affair of Lorenzo and Jessica, and a third in Bassanio's courtship of Portia. There is also a fourth, a sequel to Bassanio's courtship, in the trick which his wife plays on him with regard to the rings after they are married. Yet we never feel an unpleasant interruption when we are stopped in one story and started in one of the others, because the interest of the first lives on in the second,

owing to the interrelation of the people taking part in both. We leave Shylock's story to take up Jessica's, but Jessica is Shylock's child, and our interest in the fate of his ducats and his daughter, which began in his story, goes on in hers. We leave Antonio's story to take up Bassanio's; but Antonio's story was that of sacrifice for a friend, and in Bassanio's we see the fruit of that sacrifice in his friend's joy. Moreover, all four of the above threads of action are knotted together in one scene where Bassanio chooses the right casket. Of the swift succession of exciting scenes of the natural way in which these lead up to the final end, of the lifelike truthfulness with which each little event is made to work itself out, there is no need to speak here.

Though Shakespeare was not a third through his literary career when he wrote *The Merchant of Venice*, he had by this time mastered the technique of comedy; and we need trace his course in it no farther. *Much Ado* and *Twelfth Night* somewhat later, and *The Tempest* long years after, are simply repetitions so far as technique is concerned, of this early triumph. Let us turn now from comedy to those plays which deal with the sterner side of life. Here the development in technical skill is similar, but much slower, requiring nearly a lifetime before it reaches perfection, for the poet is grappling with a problem so difficult that it taxed all the resources of his great genius.

Before 1599 nearly all Shakespeare's plays which were not comedies were histories. By a history or chronicle play we mean a play which pictures some epoch in the past of the English nation. In one sense

of the word, most of them are tragedies, since they frequently result in death and disaster; but they are always separated as a class from tragedy proper, because they represent some great event in English national life centering around some king or leader; while tragedy proper deals with the misfortunes of some one man in any country, and regards him as an individual rather than as a national figure. They differ also in purpose, since the chronicle play was intended to appeal to Anglo-Saxon patriotism, the tragedy to our sympathy with human suffering in general.

The first and crudest of Shakespeare's histories written at about the same time as his first comedy is the triple play of *Henry VI*.<sup>1</sup> We should hesitate to judge him by this, since he wrote it only in part; but it is a woefully rambling production in which we no sooner become interested in one character than we lose him, and are asked to transfer our sympathies to another. *Richard III* is a great step forward in this respect; for the excitement and interest focuses uninterruptedly on the one central figure; and his influence on other men and theirs on him bind all the events of the drama into one coherent whole. Also, it moves straight on to a definite end which we know and wish and are prepared for beforehand. We feel, even in the midst of his success, that such a bloody tyrant cannot be tolerated forever; and like men in a tiger hunt we thrill beforehand at the dramatic catastrophe which we know is coming. *Richard III*, though a powerful play, is

<sup>1</sup> These plays are throughout designated as *I*, *II*, and *III Henry VI*.

still crude in many details. The scenes where Margaret curses her enemies, though strong as poetry, lack action as drama. In a wholly different way, they clog the onward movement of the story almost as much as some scenes in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Then again, one of the most important requirements for good technique is that everything shall be true to life. When Anne, for the sake of a little bare-faced flattery, marries a man whom she loathes, we feel that no real woman would have done this. From that moment Anne becomes a mere paper automaton to us, and we can no longer be interested in her as we would in a living woman. The motivation, as it is called, the art of showing adequately why every person should act as he or she does, is sadly lacking.

Moving onward a few years, we find marked improvement in *I Henry IV*. It is indeed not technically perfect,—in fact, Shakespeare in the chronicle play never attained what seems to modern students technical perfection,—but its minor defects are thrown into shadow by its splendid virtues. The three stories of Hotspur, the King, and the Falstaff group, though partially united by their common connection with Prince Hal, do not blend together as perfectly as the different plots in *The Merchant of Venice*, and there is some truth in the idea that the play has four heroes instead of one. But in spite of this, its general impression as a great panorama of English life is remarkably clear and delightful; and it improves on *Richard III* in its swift succession of incident, and vastly surpasses it in the lifelike truth of its motivation.

In the middle of his career Shakespeare dropped



the chronicle play, and instead began the writing of tragedies proper. He carried into this, however, the lessons learned from his experience with histories, and continued to improve. *Julius Cæsar* marks the transition from chronicle play to tragedy. The lack of close connection between the third and fourth acts and the absence of one central hero are characteristic defects of the chronicle play which the dramatist had not yet outgrown. *Hamlet*, coming next, has shaken off all the lingering relics of the older type. Of its general excellence there is no need to speak. Yet even in *Hamlet* the action at times halts and becomes disjointed. *Cæsar* and *Hamlet* are great plays, the latter, perhaps, the greatest of all plays; but, transfigured as they are by genius, they show that in the difficult problem of tragic technique the author was learning still. At the age of forty, approximately, and a year or two after *Hamlet*, Shakespeare produced *Othello*, the most perfect, although not necessarily the greatest, of all his great tragedies. It is less profoundly reflective than *Hamlet* and less passionately imaginative than *King Lear* or *Macbeth*; but no other of his masterpieces shows such perfect balance of taste and judgment, or is so free from any jarring note. Hence, through the histories and tragedies taken together, we see the same growth in technical skill which we have already found in his comedies, save that it took longer here because the poet was working in a more difficult field. It would not be true to say that each play up to *Othello* is superior to its immediate predecessor in technique, still less that it is so in absolute merit; but the general upward tendency is there.

**The Four Periods.**—Such was Shakespeare's development in meter, in taste, in conception of character, and in dramatic technique. In line with this development, it has been customary to divide his literary career into four periods and his plays into four corresponding groups. These groups or periods are characterized partly by their different degrees of maturity, but more by the difference in the character of the plays during these intervals.

The First Period includes all plays which there is good reason for dating before 1595. In this the great dramatist was serving his literary apprenticeship, learning the difficult art of play writing, and learning it by experiments and mistakes. In the course of his experiments, he tried many different types, tragedies, histories, comedies, and rewrote old plays either alone or with a more experienced playwright to help him. Nearly all of this work is full of promise; most of it is also full of faults. Here belong the early comedies mentioned above — *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Here is the crude but powerful *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, the early faults of which are redeemed by such a wealth of youthful poetic fire.

The Second Period extends roughly from 1595 to 1600. The poet has learned his profession now, is no longer a beginner but a master, though hardly yet at the summit of his powers. Here are included three chronicle plays, the two parts of *King Henry IV* and *King Henry V*, and six comedies. One of the earliest of these comedies was *The Merchant of Venice*, already mentioned. Three others, a little later, — *Much Ado*, *Twelfth*

*Night*, and *As You Like It*, — are usually regarded as Shakespeare's crowning achievement in the world of mirth and humor. In this group of plays, whether history or comedy, the author is depicting chiefly the cheerful, energetic side of life.

The Third Period really begins about 1599, for this and the second overlap; and it continues to about 1608. In the plays of this group the poet becomes interested in a wholly new set of themes. The aspects of life which he interprets are no longer bright and cheerful, but stern and sad. Here come the great tragedies, several of which we have mentioned above — *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare is now at the height of his power, for his greatest masterpieces are included in the above list. Mixed in with this wealth of splendid tragedy (though inferior to it in merit), there are also three comedies. But even the comedies share in the somber gloom which absorbed the poet's attention during this period. The comedies before 1600 had been full of sunshine, brimming with kindly, good-natured mirth, overflowing with the genial laughter which makes us love the very men at whom we are laughing. But the three comedies of this Third Period are bitter and sarcastic in their wit, making us despise the people who furnish us fun, and leaving an unpleasant taste in the mouth after the laugh is over. Some have assumed that the dark tinge of this period was due to an unknown sorrow in the poet's own life, but there seems to be no need of any such assumption. We may become interested in reading cheerful books one year and sad ones the next without being more cheerful or

more sad in one year than in the other; and what is true of the reader might reasonably be true of the writer. But whatever the cause which influenced Shakespeare, the tragedies of this group are the saddest as well as the greatest of all his plays.

The Fourth and last Period contains plays written after 1608-1609. There are only five of these, and since *Pericles* and *Henry VIII* are in large part by other hands, our interest focuses chiefly on the remaining three — *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*. All the plays of this period end happily and are wholly free from the bitterness of the Third Period comedy. Nevertheless, they have little of the rollicking, uproarious fun of the earlier comedies. Their charm lies rather in a subdued cheerfulness, a quiet, pure, sympathetic serenity of tone, less strenuous, but even more poetic, than what had gone before. In some ways they are hardly equal to the great tragedies just mentioned, for the poet is growing older now, and the fiery vigor of *Macbeth* is fading out of his verse. But in loftiness of thought and tenderness of feeling these later romances are equal to anything that the author ever gave us.

Whether other causes influenced him or not, Shakespeare was doubtless in these four periods conforming to some extent to the literary tendencies of the hour. The writings of his contemporaries also show a larger percentage of comedies between 1595-1600 than between 1590-1595. Many other dramatists, too, were writing histories while he was, and dropped them at about the same time. Likewise during his Fourth Period three-quarters of all the plays written by other men were comedies, the most successful of them in a similar

romantic tone. On the whole, too, other writers produced a rather larger percentage of tragedies during 1601-1607 than at any other time while Shakespeare was writing, although the change was not nearly as marked in them as in him. But whether the influence of contemporaries was great or small, these periods exist; and the individual plays can be better understood if read in the light of the groups to which they belong.

Perhaps the best book on Shakespeare's development as a dramatist is: *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* by G. P. Baker (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1907).

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CHIEF SOURCES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

**Shakespeare and Plagiarism.** — Among the curious alterations in public sentiment that have come in the last century or two, none is more striking than the change of attitude in regard to what is called "plagiarism." Plagiarism may be defined as the appropriation for one's own use of the literary ideas of another. The laws of patent and of copyright have led us into thinking that the ideas of a play must not be borrowed in any degree, but must originate in every detail with the writer. This is as if we should say to an inventor, "Yes, you may have invented a safety trigger for revolvers, but you must not apply it to revolvers until you have invented a completely new type of revolver from the original matchlock."

But the playwright of to-day cannot help plagiarizing his technique, many of his situations, and even his plots from earlier plays; consequently, he tries to conceal his borrowings, to placate public opinion by changing the names and the environment of his characters.

The Elizabethan audiences were less exacting. If a play about King Lear were written and acted with some success, they thought it perfectly honest for another dramatist to use this material in building up a new and better play on the story of King Lear. They cared

even less when the dramatist went to other dramas for hints on minor details. The modern audience, if not the modern world at large, holds the same view. So long as the mind of the borrower transforms and makes his own whatever he borrows, so long will his work be applauded by his audience, whatever be the existing state of the copyright laws or of public fastidiousness.

Hence we do not to-day hunt up the sources of Shakespeare's plots and characters in order to prove plagiarism, but in order to understand just how great was the power of his genius in transmuting common elements into his fine gold.

It is customary to say: "Shakespeare did not invent his plots. He was not interested in plots." So far is this from the truth that the amount of pains and skill spent by him in working over any one of his best comedies or tragedies would more than suffice for the construction of a very good modern plot. It is more true to say of most of his work, "Shakespeare did not waste his time in inventing stories."<sup>1</sup> He took stories where he found them, realized their dramatic possibilities, and spent infinite pains in weaving them together into a harmonious whole."

There is one other point to remember. The sources of Shakespeare's plays were no better literary material than the sources of most Elizabethan plays. Shakespeare's practice in adapting older plays was

<sup>1</sup> There are two plays at least which have plots probably original with Shakespeare — *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Tempest*. Both of these draw largely, however, from contemporary history and adventure, and the central idea is directly borrowed from actual events.

the common practice of the time. We can measure, therefore, the greatness of Shakespeare's achievement by a comparison with what others have made out of similar material.

Just as Shakespeare's plays fall into the groups of history, tragedy, and comedy, so his chief sources are three in number: biography, as found in the *Chronicle* of Holinshed and Plutarch's *Lives*; romance, as found in the novels of the period, which were most of them translations from Italian *novelle*; and dramatic material from other plays.

**Holinshed.**—Raphael Holinshed (died 1580?) published in 1578 a history of England, Scotland, and Ireland, usually known as Holinshed's *Chronicle*. The two immense folio volumes contain an account of Britain "from its first inhabiting" up to his own day, largely made up by combining the works of previous historians. The *Chronicle* bears evidence, however, of enormous and painstaking research which makes it valuable even now. Holinshed's style was clear, but not possessed of any distinctly literary quality. Much of what Shakespeare used was indeed but a paraphrase of an earlier chronicler, Edward Hall. Holinshed was uncritical, too, since he made no attempt to separate the legendary from the truly historical material. So far as drama is concerned, however, this was rather a help than a hindrance, since legend often crystallizes most truly the spirit of a career in an act or a saying which never had basis in fact. The work is notable chiefly for its patriotic tone, of which there is certainly more than an echo in Shakespeare's historical plays. But the effects of



steadfast continuity of national purpose, of a belief in the greatness of England, and of an insistent appeal to patriotism, which are such important elements in Shakespeare's histories, are totally wanting in Holinshed.

Not only are all of the histories of Shakespeare based either directly or through the medium of other plays upon Holinshed, but his two great tragedies, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* (the latter through an earlier play), and his comedy *Cymbeline* are also chiefly indebted to it. The work was, moreover, the source of many plays by other dramatists.

**Plutarch.** — Plutarch of Chæronea, a Greek author of the first century A.D., wrote forty-six "parallel" *Lives*, of famous Greeks and Romans. Each famous Greek was contrasted with a famous Roman whose career was somewhat similar to his own. The *Lives* have been ever since among the most popular of the classics, for they are more than mere biographies. They are the interpretation of two worlds, with all their tragic history, by one who felt the fatal force of a resistless destiny.

A scholarly French translation of Plutarch's *Lives* was published in 1559 by Jacques Amyot, Bishop of Bellozane. Twenty years after (1579) Thomas North, later Sir Thomas, published his magnificent English version.<sup>1</sup> The vigor and spirit which he flung into his work can only be compared to that of William Tyndale in his translation of the New Testament. Here was very different material for drama from the

<sup>1</sup> It is not unlikely that it was the second edition published in 1595 by Richard Field (Shakespeare's printer) that the poet read.

dry bones of history offered by Holinshed. Shakespeare paid North the sincerest compliment by borrowing, particularly in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*, not only the general story, but whole speeches with only those changes necessary for making blank verse out of prose. The last speeches of Antony and Cleopatra are indeed nearly as impressive in North's narrative form as in Shakespeare's play.

In addition to the tragedies already named, *Julius Cæsar* and almost certainly the suggestion of *Timon of Athens*, though not the play as a whole, were taken from Plutarch's *Lives*. Other Elizabethans were not slow to avail themselves of this unequalled treasure-house of story.

**Italian and Other Fiction.**—Except for Geoffrey Chaucer (1338–1400), whose *Troilus and Criseyde* Shakespeare dramatized, and John Gower (died 1408), whose *Confessio Amantis* is one of the books out of which the plot of *Pericles* may have come, there was little good English fiction read in the Elizabethan period. Educated people read, instead, Italian *novelle*, or short tales, which were usually gathered into some collection of a hundred or so. Many of these were translated into English before Shakespeare's time; and a number of similar collections had been made by English authors, who had translated good stories whenever they found them.

One of these was *Gli Heccatommiti*, 1565 (The Hundred Tales), by Giovanni Giraldi, surnamed Cinthio, which was later translated into French and was the source of *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*. Another collection was that of Matteo Bandello, whose

*Tales*, 1554–1573, translated into French by Belleforest, furnished the sources of *Much Ado About Nothing*, and perhaps *Twelfth Night*. The greatest of these collections was the *Decameron*, c. 1353, by Giovanni Boccaccio, one of whose stories, translated by William Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure*, 1564, furnished the source of *All's Well That Ends Well*. Another story of the *Decameron* was probably the source of the romantic part of the plot of *Cymbeline*. The *Merry Wives of Windsor* had a plot like the story in Straparola's *Tredici Piacevole Notte* (1550), *Thirteen Pleasant Evenings*; and *The Merchant of Venice* borrows its chief plot from Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone*.

Two of Shakespeare's plays are based on English novels written somewhat after the Italian manner — *As You Like It* on Thomas Lodge's novel-poem, *Rosalynde*, and *The Winter's Tale* from Robert Greene's *Pandosto*. The *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is from a Spanish story in the Italian style, the *Diana* of Jorge de Montemayor. The *Comedy of Errors* from Plautus is his only play based on classical sources.

The Italian *novelle* emphasized situation, but had little natural dialogue and still less characterization. The Elizabethan dramatists used them only for their plots. Never did works of higher genius spring from less inspired sources.

**The Plays used by Shakespeare.** — Although Shakespeare made up one of his plots, the *Comedy of Errors*, from two plays of Plautus (254–184 B.C.), the *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo*, the rest of the plays he used for material were contemporary work. He borrowed from them plots and situations, and occa-

sionally even lines. With the exception, however, of one of the early histories, the plays he made use of are in themselves of no value as literature. Their sole claim to notice is that they served the need of the great playwright. None but the student will ever read them. In practically every case Shakespeare so developed the story that the fiction became essentially his own; while the poetic quality of the verse, the development of character, and the heightening of dramatic effect, which he built upon it, left no more of the old play in sight than the statue shows of the bare metal rods upon which the sculptor molds his clay.

Seven histories go back to the earlier plays on the kings of England. The Second and Third Parts of *Henry VI* are taken from two earlier plays often called the *First and Second Contentions* (between the two noble houses of York and Lancaster). The First and Second parts of *Henry IV*, and *Henry V*, are all three an expansion of a cruder production, the *Famous Victories of Henry V*. *Richard III* is based upon the *True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York*; *King John* upon the *Troublesome Reigne of John, King of England*, the latter undoubtedly the best of the sources of Shakespeare's Histories.

*King Leir and His Daughters* is the only extant play which is known to have formed the basis of a Shakespearean tragedy. Shakespeare made additions in this case from other sources, borrowing Gloucester's story from Sidney's *Arcadia*. The earlier play of *Hamlet*, which it is believed Shakespeare used, is not now in existence.

Among the comedies, the *Taming of the Shrew* is

directly based upon the *Taming of a Shrew*. *Measure for Measure* is less direct, borrowing from George Whetstone's play in two parts, *Promos and Cassandra* (written before 1578).

The existence of versions in German and Dutch of plays which present plots similar in structure to Shakespeare's, but less highly developed, leads scholars to advance the theory that several lost plays may have been sources for some of his dramas. Entries or mentions of plays, with details like Shakespeare's, dated earlier than his own plays could have been in existence, are also used to further the same view. The *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the *Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and, with less reason, *Timon of Athens*, and *Twelfth Night*, are thought to have been based more or less on earlier lost plays.

Finally, a number of plays perhaps suggested details in Shakespeare's plays. Of plays so influenced, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Henry VIII* are the chief. But the debt is negligible at best, so far as the general student is concerned.

To conclude, what Shakespeare borrowed was the raw material of drama. What he gave to this material was life and art. No better way of appreciating the dramatist at his full worth could be pursued than a patient perusal and comparison of the sources of his plays with Shakespeare's own work.

The best books on this subject are: H. R. D. Anders, *Shakespeare's Books* (Berlin, 1904); *Shakespeare's Library*, ed. J. P. Collier and W. C. Hazlitt (London, 1875); and the new *Shakespeare Library* now being published by Chatto and Windus, of which several volumes are out.

## CHAPTER IX

### HOW SHAKESPEARE GOT INTO PRINT

THE Elizabethan audiences who filled to overflowing the theaters on the Bankside possessed a far purer text of Shakespeare than we of this later day can boast. In order to understand our own editions of Shakespeare, it is necessary to understand something, at least, of the conditions of publishing in Shakespeare's day and of the relations of the playhouses with the publishers.

The printing of Shakespeare's poems is an easy tale, *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594, were first printed in quarto by Richard Field, a native of Stratford, who had come to London. In each case a dedication accompanying the text was signed by Shakespeare, so that we may guess that the poet not only consented to the printing, but took care that the printing should be accurate. Twelve editions of one, eight of the other, were issued before 1660. The other volume of poetry, the Sonnets, was printed in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe, without Shakespeare's consent. Two of them, numbers 138 and 144, had appeared in the collection known as *The Passionate Pilgrim*, a pirated volume printed by W. Jaggard in 1599. No reëdition of the Sonnets appeared till 1640.

With regard to the plays it is different. It is first

to be said that in no volume containing a play or plays of Shakespeare in existence to-day is there any evidence that Shakespeare saw it through the press. All we can do is to satisfy ourselves as to how the copy of Shakespeare's plays may have got into the hands of the publishers, and as to how far that copy represents what Shakespeare must have written.

The editions of Shakespearean plays may be divided into two groups,—the separate plays which were printed in quarto<sup>1</sup> volumes before 1623, and the First Folio of Shakespeare, which was printed in 1623, a collected edition of all his plays save *Pericles*. Our text of Shakespeare, whatever one we read, is made up, either from the First Folio text, or in certain cases from the quarto volumes of certain plays which preceded the Folio; together with the attempts to restore to faulty places what Shakespeare must have written—a task which has engaged a long line of diligent scholars from early in the eighteenth century up to our own day.

**The Stationers' Company.**—In the early period of English printing, which began about 1480 and lasted up to 1557, there was very little supervision over the publishing of books, and as a result the competition was unscrupulous. There was a guild of publishers, called

<sup>1</sup> A quarto volume, or quarto, is a book which is the size of a fourth of a sheet of printing paper. The sheets are folded twice to make four leaves or eight pages, and the usual size is about 6 × 9 in. A folio is a volume of the size of a half sheet of printing paper. The paper is folded once and bound in the middle, the usual size being about 9 × 12 in. The divisions of the book made by thus folding sheets of paper are called quires, and may consist of four or eight leaves.

the Stationers' Company, in existence, but its efforts to control its members were only of a general character. In 1557, however, Philip and Mary granted a charter to the Stationers' Company under which no one not a member of the Stationers' Company could legally possess a printing press. Queen Mary was, of course, interested in controlling the press directly through the Crown. Throughout the Elizabethan period the printing of books was directly under the supervision of Her Majesty's Government, and not under the law courts. Every book had to be licensed by the company. The Wardens of the company acted as licensers in ordinary cases, and in doubtful cases the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, or some other dignitary appointed for the purpose. When the license was granted, the permission to print was entered upon the Register of the company, and it is from these records that much important knowledge about the dates of Shakespeare's plays is gained.

The Stationers' Company was interested only in protecting its members from prosecution and from competition. The author was not considered by them in the legal side of the transaction. How the printer got his manuscript to print was his own affair, not theirs.

Many authors were at that time paid by printers for the privilege of using their manuscript; but it was not considered proper that a gentleman should be paid for literary work. Robert Greene, the playwright and novelist, wrote regularly in the employ of printers. On the other hand, Sir Philip Sidney, a contemporary



of Shakespeare's, did not allow any of his writings to be printed during his lifetime. Francis Bacon published his essays only in order to forestall an unauthorized edition, and others of the time took the same course. Bacon says in his preface that to prevent their being printed would have been a troublesome procedure. It was possible for an author to prevent the publication by prosecution, but it was scarcely a wise thing to do, in view of the legal difficulties in the way. Nevertheless, fear of the law probably acted as some sort of a check on unscrupulous publishers.

The author of a play was, however, really less interested than the manager who had bought it. The manager of a theater seems, from what evidence we possess, to have believed that the printing of a play injured the chances of success upon the stage. The play was sold by the author directly to the manager, whose property it became. Copies of it might be sold to some printer by some of the players in the company, by the manager himself, or, in rarer cases, by some unscrupulous copyist taking down the play in shorthand at the performance. When a play had got out of date, it would be more apt to be sold than while it was still on the stage. In some cases, however, the printing might have no bad effect upon the attendance at its performances.

During the years before 1623, seventeen of Shakespeare's plays were published in quarto. Two of these, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, were printed in two very different versions, so that we have nineteen texts of Shakespeare's plays altogether published before the First Folio. A complete table of these

plays with the dates in which the quartos appeared follows: —

- 1594. Titus Andronicus. Later quartos in 1600 and 1611.
- 1597. Richard II. Later quartos in 1598, 1608, and 1615.
- 1597. Richard III. Later quartos in 1598, 1602, 1605, 1612, and 1622.
- 1597. Romeo and Juliet. Later quartos in 1599 (corrected edition) and 1609.
- 1598. I Henry IV. Later quartos in 1599, 1604, 1608, 1613, and 1622.
- 1598. Love's Labour's Lost.
- 1600. Merchant of Venice. Later quarto in 1619. (Copying on the title-page the original date of 1600, however.)
- 1600. Henry V. Later quartos in 1602 and 1619. (Dated on the title-page, 1608.)
- 1600. Henry IV, Part II.
- 1600. Midsummer Night's Dream. Later quarto in 1619. (Dated, however, 1600.)
- 1602. Merry Wives of Windsor. Later quarto in 1619.
- 1603. Hamlet.
- 1604. Second edition of Hamlet. Later quartos in 1605 and 1611.
- 1608. King Lear. Later quarto in 1619. (Title-page date, 1608.)
- 1608. Pericles. Later quartos in 1609, 1611, and 1619.
- 1609. Troilus and Cressida. A second quarto in 1609.
- 1622. Othello.

These are all the known quartos of Shakespeare's plays printed before the Folio. They represent two distinct classes. The first class (comprising fourteen texts) of the quartos contains good texts of the plays and is of great assistance to editors. The second (comprising five texts), the first *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *Merry Wives*, the first *Hamlet*, and *Pericles*,

is composed of thoroughly bad copies. Two of this class were not entered on the Stationers' Register at all, but were pure piracies. Two others were entered by one firm, but were printed by another. The fifth was entered and transferred on the same day. Of the fourteen good texts, twelve were regularly entered on the Stationers' Register, and the other two were evidently intended to take the place of a bad text. It is evident, therefore, that registry upon the books of the Stationers' Company was a safeguard to an author in getting before the public a good text of his writings. It also indicates that the good copies were obtained by printers in a legal manner, and so probably purchased directly from the theaters, whether from the copy which the prompter had, or from some transcript of the play. The notion that all plays were printed in Shakespeare's time by a process of piracy is thus not borne out by these facts.

The five bad quartos deserve a moment's attention. The first of these, *Romeo and Juliet*, printed and published by John Danter in 1597, omits over seven hundred lines of the play, and the stage directions are descriptions rather than definite instructions. The book is printed in two kinds of type, a fact due probably to its being printed from two presses at once. Danter got into trouble later on with other books from his dishonest ways. The second poor quarto, *Henry V*, printed in 1600, was less than half as long as the Folio text, and was probably carelessly copied by an ignorant person at a performance of the play. The third, the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, was pirated through the publisher of *Henry V*, John Busby, who assigned lit

part to another printer on the same day. As in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, the stage directions are mere descriptions. No play of Shakespeare's was more cruelly bungled by an unscrupulous copyist. The first edition of *Hamlet* in 1603 was the work of Valentine Sims. While the copying is full of blunders, this quarto is considered important, as indicating that the play was acted at first in a much shorter and less artistic version than the one which we now read. For eight months of 1603-1604 the theaters of London were closed on account of the plague, and Shakespeare's revision of *Hamlet* may have been made during this time. At any rate, the later version appeared about the end of 1604. The last of these pirated quartos, *Pericles*, was probably taken down in shorthand at the theater. Here, unfortunately, as this play was not included in the First Folio, and as all later quartos were based on the First Quarto, we have to-day what is really a corrupt and difficult text. Luckily, Shakespeare's share in this play is small.

The title-pages of the quartos of Shakespeare bear convincing testimony, not only to the genuineness of his plays, but also to his rise in reputation. Only six of his plays were printed in quartos not bearing his name. Of these, two — *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V* — began with pirated editions not bearing the author's name. Three — *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *I Henry IV* — were all followed by quartos with the poet's name upon them. The sixth play, *Titus Andronicus*, was one of his earliest works, and its authorship is even now not absolutely certain.

Since the name of a popular dramatist on the title-

page was a distinct source of revenue to the publisher after 1598, it was to be expected that anonymous plays should be ascribed in some cases to William Shakespeare by an unscrupulous or a misinformed printer. Here arose the Shakespeare 'apocrypha,' which is discussed in a following chapter.

A new problem in the history of Shakespearean quartos has been presented since 1903 by a study of the quartos of 1619. Briefly summarized, the theory which is best defended at the present time is, that in that year Thomas Pavier and William Jaggard, two printers of London, decided at first to get up a collected quarto edition of Shakespeare's plays, but on giving up this idea, they issued nine plays in a uniform size and on paper bearing identical watermarks, which were either at that time or later bound up together as a collected set of Shakespeare's plays in a single volume.<sup>1</sup> These plays are the *Whole Contention Between the Two Famous Houses of Lancaster and York*, "printed for T. P."; *A Yorkshire Tragedie*, "printed for T. P., 1619"; *Pericles*, "printed for T. P. 1619"; *Merry Wives*, "printed for Arthur Johnson, 1619"; *Sir John Oldcastle*, "printed for T. P., 1600"; *Henry V*, "printed for T. P., 1608"; *Merchant of Venice*, "printed by J. Roberts, 1600"; *King Lear*, "printed for Nathaniel Butter, 1608"; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, "printed for Thomas Fisher, 1600."

Of these plays, the *Whole Contention*, the *Yorkshire*

<sup>1</sup> This view of the Pavier-Jaggard collection is held by A. W. Pollard of the British Museum and W. W. Greg of Trinity College Library, Cambridge. The writers of this volume incline to accord it complete recognition.

*Tragedie*, and *Sir John Oldcastle* are spurious, but had been attributed to Shakespeare in earlier quartos. The five plays dated 1600 or 1608 in each case duplicated a quarto actually printed in the year claimed by the Pavier reprint; so that this earlier dating was an attempt to deceive the public into believing they were purchasing the original editions.

Under the date of the 8th of November, 1623, Edward Blount and Isaac Jaggard entered for their copy in the Stationers' Register "Mr. William Shakespeers Comedyes, Histories and Tragedyes, soe manie of the said cotypes as are not formerly entred to other men viz<sup>t</sup>, Comedyes, *The Tempest*. The two gentlemen of Verona. *Measure for Measure*. The Comedy of Errors. As you like it. All's well that ends well. Twelfth Night. The winter's tale. Histories The third parte of Henry the sixth. Henry the eighth. Tragedies. *Coriolanus*. *Timon of Athens*. *Julius Cæsar*. *Mackbeth*. *Anthonie and Cleopatra*. *Cymbeline*." This entry preluded the publication of the First Folio. Associated with Blount and Jaggard were Jaggard's son Isaac, who had the contract for the printing of the book, I. Smethwick, and W. A. Aspley. Smethwick owned at this time the rights of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet*, and also the *Taming of a Shrew*, which latter right apparently carried with it the right to print Shakespeare's adaptation of it, the *Taming of the Shrew*. Aspley owned the rights to *Much Ado About Nothing*, and to *II Henry IV*. These four printers, making arrangements with other printers, such as Law, who apparently had the rights of *I Henry IV*, *Richard II*,

and *Richard III*, and others, were thus able to bring out an apparently complete edition of Shakespeare's plays. One play, *Troilus and Cressida*, was evidently secured only at the last moment and printed very irregularly.<sup>1</sup> Blount and Jaggard apparently got the manuscripts of the sixteen plays on the Register from members of Shakespeare's company, two of whom, John Hemings and Henry Condell, affixed their names to the Address to the Reader which was prefixed to the volume. It will be remembered that these men received by Shakespeare's bequest a gold ring as a token of friendship. Their intimacy with the dramatist must have been both strong and lasting. Their actual share in the editing of the volume cannot be ascertained. It may be that all the claims are true which are made above their names in the Address to the Reader as to their care and pains in collecting and publishing his works "so to have publish'd them as where before you were abused with diverse stolne and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed, the stealthes of injurious copyists, we expos'd them ; even those are now offer'd to your view, crude and bereft of their limbes, and of the rest absolutely in their parts as he conceived them who as he was a happie imitator of nature was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together and what he thought he told with that easinesse that wee have scarce received from him a

<sup>1</sup> It was evidently designed to fit in between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Cæsar*; but the owner of the publishing rights holding out till that part of the book was ready, the editors "ran in" *Timon of Athens* to fill up. When *Troilus and Cressida* was finally arranged for, it had to be inserted between the *Histories* and *Tragedies*.

blot in his papers." On the other hand, scholarship has discovered more in the life of Edward Blount to justify his claim to the chief work of editing this volume. Whoever they were, the editors' claim to diligent care in their work was sincere. Throughout the volume there are proofs that they employed the best text which they could get, even when others were in print.

It is owing to this volume, in all probability, that we possess twenty of the best of Shakespeare's plays and the best texts of a number of the others. We are therefore glad to hear that the edition was a success and was considered worth reprinting within nine years. It is not improbable that this edition ran to five hundred copies. Among the most interesting work of the editors of the volume was the prefixing of the Droeshout engraved portrait on the title-page, and an attempt to improve the stage directions, as well as the division of most of the plays, either in whole or in part, into acts and scenes.

The twenty plays which appeared in print for the first time in the First Folio were taken in all probability directly from copies in the possession of Shakespeare's company. Their texts are, upon the whole, excellent. In the case of the sixteen other plays the editors substituted for eight of the plays already in print in quartos, independent texts from better manuscripts. This act must have involved considerable expense and difficulty, and deserves the highest praise. Five of the printed quartos were used with additions and corrections. In the case of *Titus Andronicus* a whole scene was added. In three cases only



of the sixteen plays already printed did the editors follow a quarto text without correcting it from a later theatrical copy. This conscientious effort to give posterity the best text of Shakespeare deserves our gratitude.

The Second Folio, 1632, was a reprint of the First; the Third Folio, 1663, a reprint of the Second; the Fourth Folio, 1685, a reprint of the Third. This practice of copying the latest accessible edition has been adopted by editors down to a very late period. Between 1629 and 1632 six quartos of Shakespearean plays were printed, — a fact which indicates that the First Folio edition had been exhausted and that there was a continued market. A man named Thomas Cotes acquired through one Richard Cotes the printing rights of the Jaggards, and added to them other rights derived from Pavier. The old publishers, Smethwick and Aspley, were still living and were associated with him in publishing the Second Folio. Robert Allott, June 26, 1629, had bought up Blount's title to the plays first registered in 1623, and was thus also concerned in the publication, while Richard Hawkins and Richard Meighen, who owned the rights of *Othello* and *Merry Wives*, were allowed to take shares. The editors of the Second Folio made only such alterations in the text of the First Folio as they thought necessary to make it more "correct." The vast majority of the changes are unimportant grammatical corrections, some of them obviously right, others as obviously wrong.

Five more Shakespearean quartos followed between 1634 and 1639. Between 1652 and 1655 two other

quartos were published. The Third Folio, 1664, was published by Philip Chetwind, who had married the widow of Robert Allott and thus got most of the rights in the Second Folio. Chetwind's Folio is famous, not only for the addition of *Pericles*, which alone it was his first intention to include, but also for the addition of six spurious plays — *Sir John Oldcastle*, *The Yorkshire Tragedie*, *A London Prodigall*, *The Tragedie of Locrine*, *Thomas*, *Lord Cromwell*, and *The Puritaine*, or *The Widdow of Watling Streete*. Chetwind's reason for thus adding these plays was that they had passed under Shakespeare's name or initials in their earliest prints. The Fourth Folio, 1685, is a mere reprint of the Third.

With the Fourth Folio ends the early history of how Shakespeare got into print. From that time to this a long line of famous and obscure men, at first mostly men of letters, but afterwards, and especially in our own times, trained specialists in their profession, have devoted much of their lives to the editing of Shakespeare. Their ideal has been, usually, to give readers the text of his poems and plays in their presumed primitive integrity. Constant study of his works, and of other Elizabethan writers, has given them a certain knowledge of the words and grammatical usages of that day which go far to make Elizabethan English a foreign tongue to us. On the other hand, more knowledge about the conditions of printing in Shakespeare's time has helped the editors very greatly in their attempts to set right a passage which was misprinted in the earliest printed text, or a line of which two early texts give different versions.

An example of the difficulties that still confront editors may be given from *II Henry IV*, IV, i, 94-96:—

“*Archbishop.* My brother general, the commonwealth,  
To brother born, an household cruelty.  
I make my quarrel in particular.”

Nobody knows what Shakespeare meant to say in this passage, and no satisfactory guess has ever been made as to what has happened to these lines.

A knowledge of Elizabethan English has cleared up the following passage perfectly. According to the First Folio, the only early print, Antony calls Lepidus, in *Julius Cæsar*, IV, i, 36-37:—

“A barren-spirited fellow ; one that feeds  
On objects, arts, and imitations. . . .”

This has been corrected to read in the second line

“On abjects, orts, and imitations.”

Abjects here means outcasts, and orts, scraps, or leavings; but no one unfamiliar with the language of that time could have solved the puzzle.

A different sort of problem is offered by such plays as *King Lear*, of which the quartos furnish three hundred lines not in the Folio, while the Folio has one hundred lines not in the quartos, and is, on the whole, much more carefully copied. The modern editor gives all the lines in both versions, so that we read a *King Lear* which is probably longer than Shakespeare's countrymen read or ever saw acted. The modern editor selects, however, when Folio and quartos differ, the reading which seems best.

FOLIO. "*Cordelia*.

Was this a face

To be opposed against the *jarring* winds?"

QUARTOS.

"Was this a face

To be opposed against the *warring* winds?"

In such a difference as this, the personal taste of the editor is apt to govern his text.

We cannot here go farther in explaining the problems of the Shakespeare text. To those who would know more of them, the *Variorum* edition of Dr. H. H. Furness offers a full history. In the light of the knowledge which he and other scholars have thrown upon textual criticism, it is unlikely that there will ever be poor texts of Shakespeare reprinted. The work of the Shakespeare scholars has not been in vain.

**Later Editions.**—Nicholas Rowe in 1709 produced the first edition in the modern sense. He modernized the spelling frankly, repunctuated, corrected the grammar, made out lists of the dramatis personæ, arranged the verse which was in disorder, and made a number of good emendations in difficult places. He added also exits and entrances, which in earlier prints were only inserted occasionally. Further, he completed the division of the plays into acts and scenes. Perhaps his most important work was writing a full life of Shakespeare in which several valuable traditions are preserved. The poems were not included in the edition, but were published in 1715 from the edition of 1640. He followed the Third and Fourth Folios in reprinting the spurious plays. The edition was reprinted in 1714, 1725, and 1728.

In 1725 Alexander Pope published his famous edition of Shakespeare. Pope possessed a splendid lot of the old quartos and the first two folios, but his edition was wantonly careless. He did, indeed, use some sense in excluding the seven spurious plays as well as *Pericles* from his edition, and he undoubtedly

worked hard on the text. He subdivided the scenes more minutely than Rowe after the fashion of the French stage division, — where a new scene begins with every new character instead of after the stage has been cleared. Pope's explanations of the words which appeared difficult in Shakespeare's text were often laughably far from the truth. The word 'foison,' meaning 'plenty,' Pope defined as the 'natural juice of grass.' The word 'neif,' meaning 'fist,' Pope thought meant 'woman.' Pistol is thus made to say, "Thy woman will I take." Phrases that appeared to be vulgar or unpoetical he simply dropped out, or altered without notice. He rearranged the lines in order to give them the studied smoothness characteristic of the eighteenth century. In fact, he tried to make Shakespeare as near like Pope's poetry as he could.

In 1726 Lewis Theobald published *Shakespeare Restored*, with many corrections of Pope's errors. In this little pamphlet most of the material was devoted to *Hamlet*. Theobald's corrections were taken by Pope in very bad part; and the latter tried to destroy Theobald's reputation by writing satires against him and by injuring him in every possible way in print. The first of these publications, *The Dunciad*, appeared in 1728; and this, the greatest satire in the English language, was so effective as to have obscured Theobald's real merit until our own day. Theobald's edition of Shakespeare followed in 1734, and was reprinted in 1740. It is famous for his corrections and improvements of the text, many of which are followed by all later editors of Shakespeare. The most notable of these is Mrs. Quickly's remark in Falstaff's deathbed scene, "His nose was as sharp as a pen and a' babbled of green fields." The previous texts had given "and a table of green fields." Pope had said that this nonsense crept in from the name of the property man who was named Greenfield, and thus there must have been a stage direction here, — "Bring in a table of Greenfield's."

Theobald's edition was followed in 1744 by Thomas Hanmer's edition in six volumes. Hanmer was a country gentleman, but not much of a scholar.

Warburton's edition followed in 1747. In 1765 appeared

Samuel Johnson's long-delayed edition in eight volumes. Aside from a few common-sense explanations, the edition is not of much merit.

Tyrwhitt's edition in 1766 was followed by a reprint of twenty of the early quartos by George Steevens in the same year. Two years later came the edition of Edward Capell, the greatest scholarly work since Theobald's. In this edition was the first rigorous comparison between the readings of the folios and the quartos. His quartos, now in the British Museum, are of the greatest value to Shakespeare scholars. With his edition begins the tendency to get back to the earliest form of the text and not to try to improve Shakespeare to the ideal of what the editor thinks Shakespeare should have said.

In 1773 Johnson's edition was revised by Steevens, and *Pericles* was readmitted. This was a valuable but crotchety edition. In 1790 Edmund Malone published his famous edition in ten volumes. No Shakespearean scholar ranks higher than he in reputation. Numerous editions followed up to 1855, of which the most important is James Boswell's so-called *Third Variorum* in twenty-one volumes. In 1855-1861 was published J. O. Halliwell's edition in fifteen volumes, which contains enormous masses of antiquarian material.

In 1853 appeared the forgeries of J. P. Collier, to which reference is made elsewhere.

In 1854-1861 appeared the edition in Germany of N. Delius. The Leopold Shakespeare, 1876, used Delius's text.

In 1857-1865 appeared the first good American edition of R. G. White. It contained many original suggestions. Between 1863 and 1866 appeared the edition of Clark and Wright, known as the Cambridge edition. Mr. W. Aldis Wright, now the dean of living Shakespearean scholars, is chiefly responsible for this text. It was reprinted with a few changes into the Globe edition, and is still the chief popular text.

Prof. W. A. Neilson's single volume in the Cambridge series, 1906, is the latest scholarly edition in America. It follows in most cases the positions taken by Clark and Wright.

Within the last few years there has been an enormous stimu-

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lus to Shakespeare study. The chief work of modern Shakespearean scholarship is the still incomplete *Variorum* edition of Dr. H. H. Furness and his son.

Other aids to study are reprints of the books used by Shakespeare, facsimile reprints of the original quartos of the plays, and, perhaps as useful as any one thing, the facsimile reproduction of the First Folio. The few perplexing problems that the scholar still finds in the text of Shakespeare will probably never be solved.

On the subject of this chapter, consult A. W. Pollard, *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, Methuen, London, 1910; Sidney Lee, Introduction to the facsimile reproduction of the First Folio by the Oxford University Press; T. R. Lounsbury, *The Text of Shakespeare*, New York, Scribners, 1906. For the remarks of critics and editors, the *Variorum* edition of Dr. H. H. Furness is invaluable.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PLAYS OF THE FIRST PERIOD — IMITATION AND EXPERIMENT

1587 (?)–1594

THE first period of Shakespeare's work carries him from the youthful efforts at dramatic construction to such mastery of dramatic technique and of original portrayal of life as raise him, when aided by his supreme poetic art, above all other living dramatists. It was chiefly a period in which the young poet, full of ambition, curious of his own talents, and eager for success, was feeling his way among the different types of drama which he saw reaching success on the London stage.

The longest period of experiment was in the writing of chronicle histories. The experience acquired in these six plays, all derived in some measure from earlier work by others, made Shakespeare a master of this type. Next in importance was comedy, chiefly romantic, with four plays of widely different aim and merit. These two types are brought to the highest development in the dramatist's second period. Tragedy was to wait for a fuller and riper experience. What the complete earlier version of *Romeo and Juliet* was like, we have only a faint idea; it was obviously, while in-



tensely appealing, the work of a young and immature poet. *Titus Andronicus* led nowhere in development.

Christopher Marlowe remained Shakespeare's master in the drama throughout the chronicle plays of the period. John Lyly's court comedies contained most of the types of character which are to be found in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Throughout the period Shakespeare grows in mastery of plot and of his dramatic verse; but his chief growth is away from this imitation of others into his own creative portraiture of character. The growth from the bluff soldier, Talbot, in *Henry VI* to the weak but appealing Richard II is no less marked than is that from the fantastic Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* to the unconsciously ridiculous Bottom.

Shakespeare's greatest achievements in this period, aside from *Romeo and Juliet* in the unknown first draft, are the characters of Richard II and Richard III, the former a portrait of vanity and vacillation mingled with more agreeable traits, lovable gentleness and traces at least of kingliness, the latter a Titanic figure possessed by an overmastering passion.

It is impossible to draw a satisfactory line of division between the experimental period of Shakespeare's work and the period of comedy which follows. Two plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*, lie really between the two. The chief arguments for an early grouping seem to be that the former is in some measure an artificial court comedy, and is full of riming speech and end-stopped lines; the latter derives some help from Marlowe's treatment of *The Jew of Malta*. But, on the other hand, the

mastery of original characterization in such groups as the delicate fairies of the *Dream*, or those who gather at the trial of *The Merchant*, might justify their position in the second period rather than in the first. On the whole, it is perhaps wisest to let metrical differences govern, and so to put *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the end of Imitation and Experiment; while *The Merchant of Venice* may safely usher in the great period of comedy.

The three plays known as *The Three Parts of Henry VI*, together with *Richard the Third*, constitute the history of the Wars of the Roses, in which the House of York fought the House of Lancaster through the best part of the fifteenth century, and lost the fight and the English crown in 1485, a hundred years before Shakespeare came to London. Although these plays have but slight appeal to us as readers, they must have been highly popular among Elizabethan playgoers.

**The First Part of Henry the Sixth** deals chiefly with the wars of England and France which center about the figures of Talbot, the English commander, and Joan of Arc, called Joan la Pucelle (the maiden). The former is a hero of battle, who dies fighting for England. The latter is painted according to the traditional English view, which lasted long after Shakespeare's time, as a wicked and impure woman, in league with devils, who fight for her against the righteous power of England. We are glad to think that while the Talbot scenes are probably Shakespeare's, the portrait of La Pucelle is not from his hand, as we shall see. The deaths of these protagonists prepares the way for the peace which Suffolk concludes, and the marriage

which he arranges between Margaret of Anjou and King Henry.

The Second Part of Henry the Sixth concerns the outbreak of strife between York and Lancaster, but chiefly the overthrow of the uncle of the king, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, as Protector of the Realm, and the destruction of his opponent, the Duke of Suffolk, in his turn. The play ends with the first battle of St. Albans (1455), resulting in the complete triumph of Duke Richard of York, in open rebellion against King Henry.

The Third Part of King Henry the Sixth tells of the further wars of York and Lancaster, in the course of which Richard of York is murdered, and his sons, Edward and Richard, keep up the struggle, while Warwick, styled the "Kingmaker," transfers his power to Lancaster. In the end York is triumphant; and while Henry VI and his son are murdered, and Warwick slain in battle at Barnet, Edward is crowned as Edward IV, and Richard becomes the Duke of Gloucester.

**Authorship.** — The Three Parts of *Henry the Sixth* were first printed in the First Folio, 1623. Two earlier plays, *The First Part of the Contention between the two Noble Houses of York and Lancaster* (sometimes called *1 Contention*), and *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York . . . with the whole Contention between the two Houses of Lancaster and York* (*2 Contention*), appeared in quarto in 1594 and 1595 respectively. These are to be regarded as earlier versions of *II* and *III Henry VI*.<sup>1</sup> For the *First Part of Henry VI* no dramatic source exists. The ultimate source is, of course, Holinshed's *Chronicles*.

The authorship of these plays is not ascribed to any dramatist until 1623, although, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> Robert Greene accuses

<sup>1</sup> Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama* I, 264.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 8.

Shakespeare of authorship in a stolen play, by applying to him a line from *III Henry VI* which had appeared earlier in *2 Contention*. Internal study of the three plays, however, has reduced the problem to about this state : —

*The First Part of Henry VI* is thought to have been written by Greene, with George Peele and Marlowe to help. To this Shakespeare was allowed to add a few scenes on a later revival of the play. Some critics give to him the Talbot scenes and the quarrel in the Temple ; but Professor Neilson warns us that the grounds for this and other assignments of authorship in the play "are in the highest degree precarious."

The two *Contentions* are thought to have been chiefly the work of Marlowe, with Greene to help him. Others are suggested as assistants, such as Lodge, Peele, and Shakespeare. In the revival of the two *Contentions*, Shakespeare's work amounted to a close revision, though the older material remained in larger part, both in text and plot. In this revision, Marlowe is thought to have aided, and Greene's bitter attack on Shakespeare may have been caused by the fact that Shakespeare had so supplanted him as collaborator with Marlowe, then the greatest dramatist of England. It hardly seems likely that this attack would have been made if Shakespeare had had any share in the first versions, *The Contentions*.

**Date.** — *The First Part of Henry VI* is thought to have been the play at the Rose Theatre on March 3, 1591-1592, by Lord Strange's company, since a reference by Nash about this time refers to Talbot as a stage figure. *The Second and Third Parts* have no evidence other than that of style, but are usually assigned to the period 1590-1592.

**Richard the Third** is best treated at this point, although in the date of composition *King John* may intervene between it and *III Henry VI*. It is the tale of a tyrant, who, by murdering everybody who stands in his way, including his two nephews, his brother, and his friend, wins the crown of England, only to be swept by irresist-

ible popular wrath into ruin and death on Bosworth Field. This tyrant is scarcely human, but rather the impersonation of a great passion of ambition. In this respect, as well as in lack of humor, lack of development of character, and in other ways less easy to grasp, Shakespeare is here distinctly imitative of Marlowe's method in plays like *Tamburlaine*.

**Date.** — *Richard the Third* was very popular among Elizabethans, for quartos appeared in 1597, 1598 (then first ascribed to Shakespeare), 1602, 1605, 1612, 1629, 1622, and 1634. The First Folio version is quite different in detail from the Quarto, and is thought to have been a good copy of an acting version. The date of writing can hardly be later than 1593.

**Source.** — An anonymous play called *The True Tragedie of Richard III* had appeared before Shakespeare's; just when is uncertain. A still earlier play, a tragedy in Latin called *Richardus Tertius*, also told the story. Shakespeare's chief source was, however, Holinshed's *Chronicles*, which learned the tradition of Richard's wickedness from a life of that king written in Henry VII's time, and ascribed to Sir Thomas More. In the *Chronicles* was but a bare outline of the character which the dramatist so powerfully developed.

**King John**, so far as its central theme may be said to exist, portrays the ineffectual struggles of a crafty and unscrupulous coward to stick to England's slippery throne. At first King John is successful. Bribed with the rich dowry of Blanch, niece of England, as a bride for his son the Dauphin, King Philip of France ceases his war upon England in behalf of Prince Arthur, John's nephew and rival. When the Church turns against John for his refusal to obey the Pope, and France and Austria continue the war, John is victorious, and captures Prince Arthur. At this point begins his

downfall. His cruel treatment of the young prince, while not actually ending in the murder he had planned, drives the boy to attempted escape and to death. The nobles rise and welcome the Dauphin, whose invasion of England proves fruitless, it is true, but the victory is not won by John, and the king dies ignobly at Swinstead Abbey.

Two characters rise above the rest in this drama of unworthy schemes, — Constance, the passionately devoted mother of Prince Arthur, who fights for her son with almost tigress-like ferocity, and Faulconbridge, the loyal lieutenant of King John, cynical and fond of bragging, but brave and patriotic, and gifted with a saving grace of rough humor, much needed in the sordid atmosphere he breathes. One single scene contains a note of pathos otherwise foreign to the play, — that in which John's emissary Hubert begins his cruel task of blinding poor Prince Arthur, but yields to pity and forbears.

**Date.** — *The Troublesome Raigne* was published in 1591, and probably written about that time. Shakespeare's play did not appear in print until the First Folio, 1623. Meres mentions it, however, in 1598, and internal evidence of meter and style, as well as of dramatic structure, puts the play between *Richard III* and *Richard II*, or at any rate close to them. The three plays have been arranged in every order by critics of authority. Perhaps 1592-1593 is a safe date.

**Source.** — The only source was the two parts of *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, a play which appeared anonymously in quarto in 1591. Shakespeare compressed the two parts into one, gaining obvious advantages thereby, but losing also some incidents without which the later play is unmotivated. The hatred felt by Faulconbridge for Austria was due in the earlier version to the legendary belief that

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Richard Cœur-de-Lion, his father, met death at Austria's hands. No reference to this is made by Shakespeare, but the hatred remains as a motive. In the opening scene between the Bastard and his mother, Shakespeare's condensation has injured the story somewhat. But most of his changes are improvements. He cut out the pandering to religious prejudice which in the earlier play made John a Protestant hero to suit Elizabethan opinion. He improved the exits and entrances, divided the scenes in more effective ways, and built up the element of comic relief in Faulconbridge's red-blooded humor.

The numerous alterations from historical fact, such as the youth of Arthur, the widowhood of Constance, the character of Faulconbridge, are all from the earlier version, as is the suppression of the baron's wars and Magna Charta. Shakespeare added practically nothing to the action in his source.

A still earlier play, *Kynge Johan* by Bishop John Bale (c. 1550), had nothing to do with later versions.

**Richard the Second**, unlike *Richard the Third*, is not simply the story of one man. While Richard III is on the stage during more than two-thirds of the latter play, Richard II appears during almost exactly half of the action. Richard III dominates his play throughout; Richard II in only two or three scenes. Richard's two uncles, John of Gaunt and the Duke of York, and his two cousins, Hereford (Bolingbroke, later Henry IV) and Aumerle, claim almost as much of our attention as does the central figure of the play, the light, vain, and thoughtless king.

And yet with all this improvement in the adjustment of the leading rôle to the whole picture, Shakespeare drew a far more real and complete character in Richard II than any he had yet portrayed in historical drama. It is a character seen in many lights. At first we are disappointed with Richard's love of the

spectacular when he allows Bolingbroke's challenge to Mowbray to go as far as the actual sounding of the trumpets in the lists before he casts down his warder and decrees the banishment of both. A little later we see with disgust his greedy thoughtlessness, when he insults the last hour of John of Gaunt by his importunate visit, and without a word of regret lays hold of his dead uncle's property to help on his own Irish wars. Nor does our respect for him rise at all when in the critical moment, upon the return of Bolingbroke to England, Richard's weak will vacillates between action and unmanly lament, and all the while his vanity delights to paint his misery in full-mouth'd rhetoric. Vanity is again the note of his abdication, when he calls for a mirror in which to behold the face that has borne such sorrow as his, and then in a fit of almost childish rage dashes the glass upon the ground. His whole life, like that one act, has been impulsive and futile.

But now that misfortune and degradation have come upon King Richard, Shakespeare compels us to turn from disgust to pity, and finally almost to admiration. We realize that after all Richard is a king, and that his wretched state demands compassion. Moreover, a nobler side of Richard's character is portrayed. His deeply touching farewell to his loving Queen, as he goes to his solitary confinement, though tinged with almost unmanly meekness of spirit, is yet poignant with true grief. And the last scene of all, in which he dies, vainly yet bravely resisting his murderers, is a gallant end to a life so full of indecision.



In strong contrast with this weak and still absorbing figure are the two high-minded and patriotic uncles of King Richard, and the masterful though unscrupulous Henry. The famous prophetic speech of dying John of Gaunt is committed to memory by every English schoolboy, as the expression of the highest patriotism in the noblest poetry. And just as our attitude towards Richard changes from contempt to pity and even admiration, so our admiration for Henry, the man of action and, as he calls himself, "the true-borne Englishman," turns into indignation at his usurpation of the throne and his connivance, to use no stronger term, at the murder of his sovereign. Throughout the play, however, Shakespeare makes us feel that the national cause demands Henry's triumph.

**Date.** — Marlowe's *Edward II* is usually dated 1593; and Shakespeare's *Richard II* is dated the year following, in order to accommodate facts to theory. The frequency of rime points to an earlier date, the absence of prose to a later date. Our only certain date is 1597, when a quarto appeared. Others followed in 1598, 1608, and 1615.

A play "of the deposing of Richard II" was performed by wish of the Earl of Essex in London streets in 1601, on the eve of his attempted revolt against the queen. If this was our play, then Essex failed as signally in understanding the real theme of the play as he did in interpreting the attitude of Englishmen toward him. Both the one and the other condemned usurpation in the strongest terms.

**Source.** — Holinshed's *Chronicles* furnished Shakespeare with but the bare historical outline. It is usual to suggest that Marlowe's portrayal of a similarly weak figure with a similarly tragic end suggested Shakespeare's play; and this may be, though there is nothing to indicate direct influence.

**Titus Andronicus** has a plot so revolting to modern readers that many critics like to follow the seventeenth-century tradition, which tells, according to a writer who wanted to justify his own tinkering, that Shakespeare added "some master-touches to one or two of the principal characters," and nothing more. But unfortunately not only the phraseology and the meter, but the more important external evidences point to Shakespeare, and, however we might wish it, we cannot find grounds to dismiss the theory that Shakespeare was at least responsible for the rewriting of an older play.

No play better deserves the type name of 'tragedy of blood.' The crimes which disfigure its scenes seem to us unnecessarily wanton. Briefly, the struggle is between Titus, conqueror of the Goths, and Tamora, their captive queen, who marries the Roman emperor, and who would revenge Titus's sacrifice of her son to the shades of his own slain sons. From the first five minutes, during which a noble Goth is hacked to pieces — off stage, mercifully — to the last minute of carnage, when the entire company go hands all round in murder, fifteen persons are slain, and other crimes no less horrible perpetrated. Every one at some time gets his revenge; and the play is entirely made up of plotting, killing, gloating, and counterplotting. The inhumanly brutal Aaron, the blackamoor lover of Tamora, is archvillain in all this; but the ungovernable passions of Titus render him scarcely more attractive.

The pity of it is that the young Shakespeare apparently wasted upon this slaughtering much genuine

poetic art, and no little elaboration of plot. But he was writing what the public of that day enjoyed. Developed by such real artists as Kyd, the tragedy of blood, like the modern "thriller," had about 1590 an enormous success. It is well for us to remember, too, that out of one of these tragedies of revenge and blood sprang the great tragedy of *Hamlet*.

**Date.** — The most recent authorities put the play as written not long before the publication of the First Quarto, 1594. The Stationers' Register records it on February 6, 1593-4. Second and Third Quartos followed in 1600 and 1611. None of these ascribe the play to Shakespeare. It is, however, included in the First Folio.

**Authorship and Source.** — Richard Henslowe, the manager, recorded in his Diary, April 11, 1591, the performance of a new play *Tittus and Vespacia*. In a German version, *Tito Andronico*, printed in a collection of 1620, Lucius is called Vespasian; and thus we have a slight ground for belief that the entry of Henslowe refers to an early play about our Titus. A Dutch version, *Aran en Titus*, appeared in 1641. This appears to have been based on another relation of the story, earlier and cruder than Shakespeare's. The Shakespearean version probably came from these two earlier plays, with considerable additions in plot.

The two latest students of the play, Dr. Fuller and Mr. Robertson, differ as far as they well can on the question of authorship. The former believes Shakespeare wrote every line of the present play; the latter that he wrote none of it, and that Greene and Peele had their full share. Kyd and Marlowe are assigned as authors by others. One fact stands clear, that in the face of the evidence of the First Folio and of Meres, no conclusive internal evidence has disposed of the theory of Shakespearean authorship. The play was enormously popular, if we may judge by contemporary references to it, and a mistake in attribution by Meres would therefore have been the more re-

markable. Incredible, too, as it may seem, the earlier versions must have been more revolting than Shakespeare's; so that there is really a lift into higher drama.

**Romeo and Juliet** stands out from the other great tragedies of Shakespeare, not only in point of time, but in its central theme. It deals with the power of nature in awaking youth to full manhood and womanhood through the sudden coming of pure and supreme love; with the danger which always attends the precipitate call of this awakening; and with the sudden storm which overcasts the brilliant day of passion. The enmity of the rival houses of Montague and Capulet, to which Romeo and Juliet belong, is but a concrete form of this danger that ever waits when nature prompts. Romeo's fancied love for another disappears like a drop of water on a stone in the sun, when his glance meets Juliet's at the Capulet's ball. Love takes equally sudden hold of her. Worldly and religious caution seek to stem the flood of passion, or at least to direct it. The lovers are married at Friar Laurence's cell; but in the sudden whirl of events that follow the friar's amiable schemes, one slight error on his part wastes all that glorious passion and youth have won. It was not his fault, after all; such is the eternal tragedy when Youth meets Love, and Nature leads them unrestrained to peril.

In perfection of dramatic technique parts of this play rank with the very best of Shakespeare's work. When to this is added the extraordinary beauty and fire of the poetry, and the brilliancy of color and stage picture afforded by the setting in old Verona, it is no wonder that to-day no mouthing of the words, no

tawdriness of setting, and no wretchedness of acting can hinder the supreme appeal of this play to audiences all over the world. The chief characters are well contrasted by the dramatist. Romeo, affecting sadness, but in reality merry by nature, becomes grave when the realization of love comes upon him. Juliet, when love comes, rises gladly to meet its full claim. She is the one who plans and dares, and Romeo the one who listens. Contrasted with Romeo is his friend, Mercutio, gay and daring, loving and light-hearted; contrasted with Juliet is her old nurse, devoted, like the family cat, but unscrupulous, vain, and worldly, — a great comic figure.

**Date.** — There is throughout the play, but chiefly in the rimed passages in the earlier parts, a great deal of verbal conceit and playing upon words, which mark immaturity. The use of sonnets in two places, and the abundance of rime, point also to early work; but the dramatic technique and the development of character equal the work of later periods.

The First Quarto is a garbled copy taken down in the theater. It was printed in 1597. Its title claims that "it hath been often (with great applause) plaid publicquely, by the right Honourable the L. of Hunsdon his servants." The company in which Shakespeare acted was so called from July, 1596, to April, 1597. The Second Quarto, "newly corrected, augmented, and amended," appeared in 1599, and is the basis of all later texts. Three others followed — 1609, one undated, and 1637.

It is generally held that Shakespeare wrote much, perhaps all, of the play in the early nineties, and that he revised it for production about 1597. The play is therefore a stepping-stone between the first and second periods of his work.

**Source.** — The development of the story has been traced from Luigi da Porto's history of *Romeo and Giulietta* (pr. 1530 at Venice) through Bandello, Boisteau, and Painter's *Palace of*

*Pleasure*, to Arthur Brooke's poem *Romeus and Juliet* (1562), and to a lost English play which Brooke says in his address "To the Reader" he had seen on the stage, but is now known only through a Dutch play of 1630 based upon it.

The part in which Shakespeare altered the action most notably is the first scene, one of the most masterly expositions of a dramatic situation ever written. The nurse is borrowed from Brooke, the death of Mercutio from the old play. The whole is, however, completely transfused by the welding fire of genius.

**Love's Labour's Lost.** — Obviously imitative of the comedies of John Lyly, *Love's Labour's Lost* is a light, pleasant court comedy, with but a slight thread of plot. The king of Navarre and three of his nobles forswear for three years the society of ladies in order to pursue study. This plan is interrupted by the Princess of France, who with three ladies comes on an embassy to Navarre. The inevitable happens; the gentlemen fall in love with the ladies, and, after ineffectual struggles to keep their oaths, give up the pursuit of learning for that of love. This runs on merrily enough in courtly fashion till the announcement of the death of the king of France ends the embassy, and the lovers are put on a year's probation of constancy. In the subplot, or minor story, the play is notable for the burlesquing of two types of character — a pompous pedantic schoolmaster, and a braggart who always speaks in high-flown metaphor. These two, happily contrasted with a country curate, a court page, and a country clown with his lass, make much good sport.

It is often said, but as we believe without sufficient proof, that the wit combats of the lords and ladies,

and the artificial speech of the sonneteering courtiers, were also introduced for burlesque. These elements appear, however, in other plays than this, with no intention of burlesque; and it seems probable that Shakespeare greatly enjoyed this display of his power as a master in the prevailing fashion of courtly repartee. In this fashion, as well as in the handling of the low-comedy figures, and in other ways, Shakespeare followed in the steps of John Lyly, the author of the novel *Euphues* and of the seven court comedies written in the decade before *Love's Labour's Lost*. Shakespeare's play, however, far surpasses those which it imitated.

**Date.** — The date of *Love's Labour's Lost* is entirely a matter of conjecture. It may well have been the very earliest of Shakespeare's comedies. Most scholars agree that the characteristics of style to which we have referred, together with the great use of rime (see p. 81) and the immaturity of the play as a whole, must indicate a very early date, and therefore put the play not later than 1591.

A quarto was published in 1598, "newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespere." The corrections, from certain mistakes of the printer, appear to be in the speeches of the wittiest of the lords and ladies, Biron and Rosaline. The play next appeared in the Folio.

**Source.** — No direct source has been discovered. In 1586, Catherine de' Medici, accompanied by her ladies, visited the court of Henry of Navarre, and attempted to settle the disputes between that prince and her son, Henry III. Other hints may also have come from French history. The masque of Muscovites may have been based on the joke played on a Russian ambassador in York Gardens in 1582, when the ambassador was hoping to get a lady of Elizabeth's court as a wife for the Czar. A mocking presentation of this lady was made with much ceremony.

**The Comedy of Errors.** — Mistaken identity (which the Elizabethans called "Error") is nearly always amusing, whether on the stage or in actual life. *The Comedy of Errors* is a play in which this situation is developed to the extreme of improbability; but we lose sight of this in the roaring fun which results. Nowadays we should call a play of this type a farce, since most of the fun comes in this way from situations which are improbable, and since the play depends on these for success rather than on characterization or dialogue.

A merchant of Syracuse has had twin sons, and bought twin servants for them. His wife with one twin son and his twin slave has been lost by shipwreck and has come to live in Ephesus. The other son and slave, when grown, have started out to find their brothers, and the father, some years later, starts out to find him. They come to Ephesus, and an amusing series of errors at once begins. The wife takes the wrong twin for her husband, the master beats the wrong slave, the wrong son disowns his father, the twin at Ephesus is arrested instead of his brother, and the twin slave Dromio of Syracuse is claimed as a husband by a black kitchen girl of Ephesus. The situation gets more and more mixed, until at last the real identity of the strangers from Syracuse is established, and all ends happily.

**Date.** — There is much wordplay of a rather cheap kind, much doggerel, and much jingling rime in this play. All these things point to early work. A reference (III, ii, 125-127) to France "making war against her heir" admits the play to the period 1585-1594, when Henry of Navarre was received as king



of France. The play was probably written not later than 1591. The play was first printed in the First Folio.

**Source.**—Shakespeare borrowed most of his plot from the *Menaechmi* of Plautus. Shakespeare added to Plautus's story the second twin-slave and the parents, together with the girl whom the elder twin meets and loves in Syracuse. This elaboration of the plot adds much to the attractiveness of the whole story. From the *Amphitruo* of Plautus, Shakespeare derived the doubling of slaves, and the scene in which the younger twin and his slave are shut out of their own home.

**The Two Gentlemen of Verona** is the first of the series of Shakespeare's romantic comedies. Our interest in this play turns upon the purely romantic characters; two friends, one true, the other recreant; the true friend exiled to an outlaw's life in a forest, the false in favor at court; two loving girls, one fair and radiant, the other dark and slighted, and following her lover in boy's dress; two clowns, Speed and Lance, one a mere word tosser, the other of rare humor. The plot is of slighter importance; a discovered elopement, and a maiden rescued from rude, uncivil hands, are the only incidents of account. All ends happily as in romance, and the recreant friend is forgiven.

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was an experiment along certain directions which were later to repay the dramatist most richly. Here first an exquisite lyric interprets the romantic note in the play; here first the production of a troth-plight ring confounds the faithless lover, and here we first meet one of the charming group of loving ladies in disguise.

But as a whole the play is disappointing. The plot is too fantastic; Proteus too much of a cad; Julia, though brave and modest, is yet too faithful; Valentine

too easy a friend. The illusion of romance throws a transitory glamour over the scene, but, save in the development of character, the play seems immature, when compared with the greater comedies that followed it.

**Date.** — The first mention of the play is by Meres (1598); the first print that in the First Folio (1623). The presence of alternate riming sonnets and doggerel rime on the one hand, and of a number of double endings on the other, render 1592 a reasonable date. In its development of character it marks a great advance over the other two comedies of this period.

**Source.** — The chief source was a story of a shepherdess, an episode in the Spanish novel, *Diana Enamorada*, by Jorge de Montemayor (1592). Shakespeare probably read it in an English translation by B. Yonge, which had been in Ms. about ten years. This story gives Julia's part of the play, but contains no Valentine. The Silvia of the story, Celia, falls in love instead with the disguised Felismena, and when rejected kills herself. Whether it was Shakespeare who felt the need of a Valentine to support the tale, or whether this was done in the lost play of *Felix and Philomena*, acted in 1584, cannot be told. The Valentine element may have been borrowed from another play, of which a German version exists (1620).

**Midsummer Night's Dream** is Shakespeare's experiment in the fairy play. Four lovers, two young Athenians of high birth and their sweethearts, are almost inextricably tangled by careless Robin Goodfellow, who has dropped the juice of love in idleness upon the eyes of the wrong lovers. King Oberon tricks his capricious and resentful little queen, by the aid of the same juice, into the absurdest infatuation for a clownish weaver, who has come out with his mates to rehearse a play to celebrate Theseus's wedding, but has fallen asleep and

wakened to find an ass's head planted upon him. All comes right, as it ever must in fairyland; the true lovers are reunited; the faithful unloved lady gets her faithless lover; Titania repents and is forgiven; and Theseus's wedding is graced by the "mirthfullest tragedy that ever was seen."

We have in *Midsummer Night's Dream* three distinct groups of characters—the lovers, the city clowns rehearsing for the play, and the fairies. These three diverse groups are combined in the most skillful way by an intricate interweaving of plot and by the final appearance of all three groups at the wedding festivities of the Duke of Athens and his Amazon bride Hypolita. The characterization, light but delicate throughout, the mastery of the intricate story, the perfection of the comic parts, and the unsurpassed lyrical power of the poetry, are all the evidence we need that Shakespeare is now his own master in the drama, and can pass on to the supreme heights of his art. He has learned his trade for good and all.

It is not a bad way of placing the last of the comedies in the first period of Shakespeare's production, to say that it is the counterpart in comedy of *Romeo and Juliet*. Like Romeo, Lysander has made love to Hermia, has sung at her window by moonlight, and has won her heart, while her father has promised her hand to another. Like the lovers in the tragedy, Lysander and Hermia plan flight, and an error in this plan would have been as fatal as it was in *Romeo and Juliet*, but for the kind interposition of the fairies. Again, the "tedious brief scene" of Pyramus and Thisbe, performed by the rustics at the close of the play, is noth-

ing but a delightful parody on the very theme of *Romeo and Juliet*, even to the mistaken death, and the suicide of the heroine upon realization of the truth. At the end of the parody, as if in mockery of the Capulets and Montagues, Bottom starts up to tell us that "the wall is down that parted their fathers." Finally, the whole fairy story is the creation of Shakespeare in a *Mercutio* mood.

In the diversity of its metrical form, *Midsummer Night's Dream* is also the counterpart of *Romeo and Juliet*. The abundance of rimed couplet, combined wherever there is intensity of feeling with a perfect form of blank verse, is reminiscent of the earlier play. Passages of equally splendid poetic power meet us all through, while at the same time we feel the very charm of youthful fervor in expression that the tragedy displayed.

**Date.**—There is nothing certain to guide us in assigning a date to the play, except the mention of it in Meres's list, in 1598. The absence of a uniform structure of verse, the large proportion of rime (partly due, of course, to the nature of the play), the unequal measure of characterization, and the number of passages of purely lyric beauty argue an earlier date than students who notice only the skillful plot structure are willing to assign. Perhaps 1593–5 would indicate this variation in authorities. Some evidence, of the slightest kind, is advanced for 1594. A quarto was printed in 1600, another with the spurious date 1600, really in 1619.

**Source.**—The plot of the lovers has no known direct source. The *Diana Enamorada* has a love potion with an effect similar to that of Oberon's. The wedding of Theseus and the Amazon queen is the opening theme of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, and some minor details may also have been borrowed from that story. No doubt, Shakespeare had also read for details North's

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account of Theseus in his translation of Plutarch. Pyramus and Thisbe came originally from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which had been translated into English before this time. Chaucer tells the same story in his *Legend of Good Women*.

The fairies are almost entirely Shakespeare's creation. Titania was one of Ovid's names for Diana; Oberon was a common name for the fairy king, both in the *Faerie Queene* and elsewhere. Robin Goodfellow was a favorite character among the common folks. But fairies, as we all know them, are like the Twins in *Through the Looking-glass*, things of the fancy of one man, and that man Shakespeare.

There is the atmosphere of a wedding about the whole play, and this fact has led most scholars to think that the play was written for some particular wedding, — just whose has never been settled. The flattery of the virgin Queen (II, i, 157 f.) and other references to purity might show that Queen Elizabeth was one of the wedding guests.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PLAYS OF THE SECOND PERIOD — COMEDY AND HISTORY

It is difficult for us of to-day to realize that Shakespeare was ever less than the greatest dramatist of his time, to think of him as the pupil and imitator of other dramatists. He did, indeed, pass through this stage of his development with extraordinary rapidity, so that its traces are barely perceptible in the later plays of his First Period. In the plays of his Second Period even these traces disappear. If his portrayal of Shylock shows the influence of Marlowe's Jew of Malta, it is in no sense derivative, and it is the last appearance in Shakespeare's work of characterization clearly dependent upon the plays of his predecessors. However much Shakespeare's choice of themes may have been determined by the public taste or by the work of his fellows, in the creation of character he is henceforth his own master. Having acquired this mastery, he uses it to depict life in its most joyous aspect. For the time being he dwells little upon men's failures and sorrows. He does not ignore life's darker side, — he loved life too well for that, — but he uses it merely as a background for pictures of youth and happiness and success. Although among the comedies of this period he wrote also three historical plays, they

have not the tragic character of the earlier histories. They deal with youth and hope instead of crime, weakness, and failure. In the two parts of *Henry IV* there is quite as much comedy as there is history; in *Henry V*, even though the comic interest is slighter, the theme is still one of youth and joy as personified in the figure of the vigorous, successful young king. For convenience' sake, however, we may separate the histories from the comedies. To do this we shall have to depart somewhat from chronological order, and, since there are fewer histories, we shall consider them first.

**Henry IV, Part I.** — To the development of *Henry V* from the wayward prince to one of England's most beloved heroes, Shakespeare devoted three plays, *Henry IV, Parts I and II*, and *Henry V*. The historical event around which the first of these centers is the rebellion of the Percies, which culminated in the defeat and death of Harry Percy, 'Hotspur,' on Shrewsbury field. In *Richard II*, Shakespeare had foreshadowed what was to come. The deposed king had prophesied that his successor, Henry Bolingbroke, crowned as Henry IV, would fall out with the great Percy family which had put him on the throne; that the Percies would never be satisfied with what Henry would do for them; and that Henry would hate and distrust them on the ground that those who had made a king could unmake one as well. And this prophecy was fulfilled. Uniting with the Scots under Douglas, with the Archbishop of York, with Glendower, who was seeking to reëstablish the independence of Wales, and with Mortimer, the natural successor of Richard,

the Percies raised the standard of revolt. What might have happened had all things gone as they were planned, we can never know; but Northumberland, the head of the family, feigned sickness; Glendower and Mortimer were kept away; the Archbishop dallied; and failure was the result. This situation gave Shakespeare an opportunity to paint a number of remarkable portraits; but the scheming, crafty Worcester, the vacillating Northumberland, the mystic Glendower, are all overshadowed by the figure of Hotspur, wrong-headed, impulsive, yet so aflame with young life and enthusiasm, so ready to dare all for honor's sake, that he is almost more attractive than the Prince himself. Over against the older leaders of the rebellion stands the lonely figure of Henry IV, misunderstood and little loved by his sons, who has centered his whole existence upon getting and keeping the throne of England. To this one end he bends every energy of his shrewd, strong, hard nature. Such a man could never understand a personality like that of his older son, nor could the son understand the father. Prince Hal, loving life in all its manifestations, joy in all its forms, could find small satisfaction in the rigid etiquette of a loveless court so long as it offered him an opportunity for little more than formal activity. When the rebellion of the Percies showed him that he could do the state real service, he seized his opportunity gladly, gayly, modestly. On his father's cause he centered the energies which he had previously scattered. With this new demand to meet, he no longer had time for his old companions. His old life was thrown off like a coat discarded under stress of work.



Even before that time came, however, Hal was not one who could enjoy ordinary low company; but the friends which had distracted him were far from ordinary. In Falstaff, the leader of the riotous group, Shakespeare created one of the greatest comic figures in all literature. Never at a loss, Falstaff masters alike sack, difficulties, and companions. He is an incarnation of joy for whom moral laws do not exist. Because he will not fight when he sees no chance of victory, he has been called a coward, but no coward ever had such superb coolness in the face of danger. Falstaff's conduct in a fight is explained by his contempt for all conventions which bring no joy—a standard which reduces honor to a mere word. So full of joy was he that he inspired it in his companions. To be with him was to be merry.

**Date.** — The play was entered in the Stationers' Register, and a quarto was printed in 1598. Meres mentions the play without indicating whether he meant one part or both. The evidence of meter and style point to a date much earlier than Meres's entry, so that 1597 is the year to which Part I is commonly assigned.

**Source.** — For the serious plot of this play, Shakespeare drew upon Holinshed. He had no scruples, however, against altering history for dramatic purposes. Thus he brings within a much shorter period of time the battles in Wales and Scotland, makes Hal and Hotspur of approximately the same age, and unites two people in the character of Mortimer. The situations in the scenes which show Hal with Falstaff and his fellows are largely borrowed from an old play called *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, but this source furnished only the barest and crudest outlines, and gave practically no hint of the characters as Shakespeare conceived them. The reference in Act I, Sc. ii, to Falstaff as the 'old lad of the castle' shows that his name was originally

Oldcastle, as in *The Famous Victories*. Oldcastle was a historical personage quite unlike Falstaff, and it is supposed that the change was made to spare the feeling of Oldcastle's descendants.

**Henry IV, Part II.** — This part is less a play than a series of loosely connected scenes. The final suppression of the rebellion, which had been continued by the Archbishop of York, the sickness and death of Henry IV, and the accession of Prince Hal as Henry V, are matters essentially undramatic and incapable of unified treatment, while the growing separation of Hal and Falstaff deprived the underplot of that close connection with the main action which it had in the preceding play. Feeling the weakness of the main plot, Shakespeare reduced it to a subordinate position, making it little more than a series of historical pictures inserted between the scenes in which Falstaff and his companions figure. He enriched this part of the play, on the other hand, by the introduction of a number of superbly poetical speeches, the best known of which is that beginning, "O Sleep, O gentle Sleep." To the comic groups Shakespeare added a number of new figures, among them the braggart Pistol, whose speech bristles with the high-sounding terms he has borrowed from the theater, and old Justice Shallow, so fond of recalling the gay nights and days which are as much figments of his imagination as is his assumed familiarity with the great John of Gaunt. By placing more stress upon the evil and less pleasing sides of Falstaff's nature, Shakespeare evidently intended to prepare his readers' minds for the definite break between old Jack and the new king; but in this wonderful man he had created a character so fascinating that he could not spoil it; and

the king's public rejection of Falstaff comes as a painful shock which impresses one as much with the coldly calculating side of the Bolingbroke nature as it does with the sad inevitability of the rupture.

**Source and Date.** — The sources for this play are the same as those of its predecessor. Although the first and only quarto was not printed until 1600, there is a reference to this part in Jonson's *Every Man Out of his Humour*, which was produced in 1599. It must, therefore, have been written shortly after Part I, and it is accordingly dated 1598.

**Henry V.** — In this, which is really the third play of a trilogy, Shakespeare adopted a manner of treatment quite unlike that which characterizes the other two. *Henry V* is really a dramatized epic, an almost lyric rhapsody cast in the form of dialogue. Falstaff has disappeared from view, and is recalled only by the affecting story of his death. This episode, however, brief as it is, reveals the love which the old knight evoked from his companions, while the narrative of his last hours is the more pathetic for being put in the mouth of the comic figure of Dame Quickly. Falstaff's place was one which could not be filled, and the comic scenes become comparatively insignificant, although the quarrels of Pistol and the Welshman Fluellen have a distinctive humor. A figure which replaces the classic chorus connects the scattered historical scenes by means of superb narrative verse. Each episode glorifies a new aspect of Henry's character. We see him as the valiant soldier; as the leader rising superior to tremendous odds; as the democratic king who, concealing his rank, talks and jests with a common soldier; and

as the bluff, hearty suitor of a foreign bride. In thus seeing him, moreover, we see not only the individual man; we see him as an ideal Englishman, as the embodiment of the type which the men of Shakespeare's day — and of ours, too, for that matter — loved and admired and honored. In celebrating Henry's victories, Shakespeare was also celebrating England's more recent victories over her enemies abroad, so that the play is a great national pæan, the song of heroic, triumphant England.

**Date and Source.** — Like its predecessors, *Henry V* is founded on Holinshed, with some additions taken from the Famous Victories. The allusion in the chorus which precedes Act V to the Irish expedition of the Earl of Essex fixes the date of composition between April 14 and September 28, 1599. A quarto, almost certainly pirated, was printed in 1600 and reprinted in 1602, 1608, and 1619 (in the latter with the false date of 1608). The text of these quartos is, therefore, much inferior to that of the Folio.

**The Merchant of Venice.** — As usually presented on the modern stage, *The Merchant of Venice* appears to be a comedy, which is overshadowed by one tragic figure, that of the Jew Shylock, the representative of a down-trodden people, deprived of his money by a tricky lawyer and deprived of his daughter by a tricky Christian. Students, on the other hand, have maintained that to the Elizabethans Shylock was merely a comic figure, the defeat of whose vile plot to get the life of his Christian debtor, Antonio, by taking a pound of his flesh in place of the unpaid gold, was greeted with shouts of delighted laughter. As a matter of fact, Shylock, then as now, was a human being, and by virtue

of that fact both ridiculous and pathetic. In any case, whatever the dominant note of his character, he is not the dominant figure of the play. If he were, the fifth act, which ends the play with moonlight and music and the laughter of happy lovers, would be distinctly out of place. Yet it is in reality the absence of such defects of taste, the ability to bring everything into its proper place, to make a harmonious whole out of the most various tones, which best characterizes the Shakespearean comedy of this period. Instead of being a play in which one great character is set in relief against a number of lesser ones, *The Merchant of Venice* is a comedy in which there is an unusually large number of characters of nearly equal importance and an unusually large number of plots of nearly equal interest. There is the plot which has to do with Portia's marriage, in which the right lover wins this gracious merry lady by choosing the proper one of three locked caskets. There is the plot which deals with the elopement of the Jew's daughter, Jessica. There is the plot which relates the story of the bond given by Antonio to the Jew in return for the loan which enables Antonio's friend, Bassanio, to carry on his suit for Portia's hand, the bond, which, when forfeited, would have cost Antonio his life had not Portia, disguised as a lawyer, defeated Shylock's treacherous design. There is the plot which tells how Bassanio and his friend Gratiano give their wedding rings as rewards to the pretended lawyer and his assistant, really their wives Portia and Nerissa in disguise, — an act which gives the wives a chance to make much trouble for their lords. And all these plots are worked out with an abundance of interest-

ing detail, and are so perfectly interwoven that the play has all of the wonderful harmony of a Turkish rug, as well as its brilliant variety. No play of Shakespeare's depends more for its effect on plot, on the sheer interest of the stories, and no one has, consequently, situations which are more effective on the stage. It is, perhaps, an inevitable result that the individual characters have a somewhat less permanent, less deeply satisfying charm than do those of the comedies which follow. None of these successors, however, presents a larger or more varied group of delightful men and women.

**Date.** — The later limit of the date is settled by the mention of this play in Meres's catalogue, and by its entry in the Stationers' Register of that same year. Basing their opinion on extremely unsubstantial internal evidence, some scholars have dated the play as early as 1594, but the evidence of style and construction make a date before 1596 unlikely. Two quartos were printed, one in 1600; the other, though copying the date 1600 upon its title-page, was probably printed in 1619.

**Source.** — The story of the pound of flesh and that of the choice of caskets are extremely ancient. The former is combined with that of the wedding rings in Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone* (the first novel of the fourth day), a story which Shakespeare probably knew and may have used. Alexander Silvayn's *The Orator*, printed in English translation in 1596, has, in connection with a bond episode, speeches made by a Jew which may be the source of some of Shylock's lines. The combination of these plots with those of Jessica and Nerissa is, so far as we can yet prove, original with Shakespeare; but we cannot be certain how much *The Merchant of Venice* resembles a lost play of the Jew mentioned in Gosson's *School of Abuse* (1579), "representing the greediness of worldly chusers, and bloody mindes of Usurers."

**The Taming of the Shrew.** — *The Taming of the Shrew* is only in part the work of Shakespeare. Just how

much he had to do with making over the underplot, we shall probably never know; but, in any case, he did not write the dialogue of this part of the play, and its construction is not particularly remarkable. The winning of a girl by a suitor disguised as a teacher is a conventional theme of comedy, as is the disguising of a stranger to take the place of an absent father in order to confirm a young lover's suit. The main plot Shakespeare certainly left as he found it. It tells how an ungovernable, willful girl was made into a submissive wife by a husband who assumed for the purpose a manner even wilder than her own, so wild that not even she could endure it. This story is presented in scenes of uproarious farce in which there is little opportunity for subtle characterization or the higher sort of comedy. What Shakespeare did was to give to the hero and heroine, Petruchio and Katherine, a semblance of reality, and to add enormously to the life and movement of the scenes in which they appear. Some of these scenes are very effective on the stage, but they are not of a sort to reveal Shakespeare's greatest qualities. The induction, the framework in which the play is set, is, however, quite another matter. The story of the drunken tinker, Sly, unfortunately omitted in many modern presentations, is a little masterpiece. A nobleman returning from the hunt finds Sly lying in a drunken stupor before an inn. The nobleman has Sly taken to his country house, has him dressed in rich clothing, has him awakened by servants who make him believe that he is really a lord, and finally has the play performed before him. The outline of this induction was in the old play which Shakespeare revised; but

he developed the crude work of his predecessor into scenes so delightfully realistic, into characterization so richly humorous, that this induction takes its place among the great comic episodes of literature.

**Date.** — No certain evidence for the date of this play exists, even the metrical tests failing us because of the collaboration. It is commonly assigned to the years 1596-7, but this is little more than a guess.

**Source.** — As has already been indicated, this play is the revision of an older play entitled *The Taming of a Shrew*. The latter was probably written by a disciple of Marlowe, and was first printed in quarto in 1594. The chief change which the revision made in the plot was that which gave Katherine one sister instead of two and added the interest of rival suitors for this sister's hand. Stories concerning the taming of a shrewish woman are both ancient and common, but no direct antecedent of the older play has been discovered, although some incidents seem to have been borrowed from Gascoigne's *Supposes*, a translation from the Italian of Ariosto.

**Authorship.** — The identity of Shakespeare's collaborator is unknown, nor is it possible to define exactly the limits of his work. It is practically certain, however, that Shakespeare wrote the Induction; II, i, 169-326; III, ii, with the possible exception of 130-150; IV, i, iii, and v; V, ii, at least as far as 175.

**The Merry Wives of Windsor.** — *The Merry Wives* is the only comedy in which Shakespeare avowedly presents the middle-class people of an English town. In other comedies English characters and customs appear through the thin disguise of Italian names; in the histories there are comic scenes drawn from English life; but only here does Shakespeare desert the city and the country for the small town and draw the larger number of his characters from the great middle class.



A tradition has come down to us, one which is supported by the nature of the play, that Queen Elizabeth was so fascinated by the character of Falstaff as he appeared in *Henry IV* that she requested Shakespeare to show Falstaff in love, and that Shakespeare, in obedience to this command, wrote the play within a fortnight. Unless this tradition be true, it is difficult to explain why Shakespeare should have written a comedy which is, in comparison with his other work of this period, at once conventional and mediocre. The subject — the intrigues of Falstaff with two married women, and the wooing of a commonplace girl by two foolish suitors and another as commonplace as herself — gave Shakespeare little opportunity for poetry and none for the portrayal of the types of character most congenial to his temperament. The greatest blemish on the play, however, from the standpoint of a student of Shakespeare, is that the man called Falstaff is not Falstaff at all, that this Falstaff bears only an outward resemblance to the Falstaff of the historical plays. If we may misquote the poet, Falstaff died a martyr, and this is not the man. The real Falstaff would never have stooped to the weak devices adopted by the man who bears his name, would never have been three times the dupe of transparent tricks. The task demanded of Shakespeare was one impossible of performance. Falstaff could not have fallen in love in the way which the queen desired. Nor is there much to compensate for this degradation of the greatest comic figure in literature. Falstaff's companions share, although to a lesser degree, in their leader's fall, while the two comic figures which are original with this play are compara-

tively unsuccessful studies in French and Welsh dialect. Judged by Shakespeare's own standard, this work is as middle-class as its characters; judged by any other, it is an amusing comedy of intrigue, realistic in type and abounding in comic situations which approach the borderland of farce.

**Date.** — This play was entered on the books of the Stationers' Company January 18, 1602. It was certainly written after the two parts of *Henry IV*, and if, as is most probable, the character of Nym is a revival and not an imperfect first sketch, the play must have succeeded *Henry V*. On these grounds the play is best assigned to 1599. It was first printed in quarto in 1602, but this version is extremely faulty, besides being considerably shorter than that of the First Folio. The quarto seems to have been printed from a stenographic report of an acting version of the play, made by an unskillful reporter for a piratical publisher.

**Source.** — The main plot resembles a story derived from an Italian source which is found in Tarlton's *News out of Purgatorie*. For the underplot and a number of details in the working out of the main plot, no source is known.

**Much Ado About Nothing.** — In this play, as nowhere else, Shakespeare has given us the boon of laughter — not the smile, not the uncontrolled guffaw, but rippling, melodious laughter. From the beginning to the end this is the dominant note. If the great trio of which this was the first be classified as romantic comedies, we may perhaps say that in speaking of the others we should lay the stress on the word 'romantic,' in this, on the word 'comedy.' As regards the main plot, *Much Ado* is, to be sure, the most serious of the three. When the machinations of the villainous Prince John lead Claudio to believe his intended bride un-

faithful, and to reject this pure-souled Hero with violence and contumely at the very steps of the altar, we have a situation which borders on the tragic. The mingled doubt, rage, and despair of Hero's father is, moreover, undoubtedly affecting. Nevertheless, powerful as these scenes are, they are so girt about with laughter that they cannot destroy our good spirits. Even at their height, the manifestations of human wickedness, credulity, and weakness seem but the illusions of a moment, soon to be dissipated by the power of radiant mirth. It is not without significance that the deep-laid plot should be defeated through the agency of the immortal Dogberry, most deliciously foolish of constables. Nor is it mere chance that Hero and Claudio are so constantly accompanied by Beatrice and Benedick, that amazing pair to whom life is one long jest. In the merry war which is constantly raging between these two, their shafts never fail of their mark, but neither is once wounded. Like magnesium lights, their minds send forth showers of brilliant sparks which hit, but do not wound. But their wit is something more than empty sparkle. It is the effervescence of abounding life, a life too sound and perfect to be devoid of feeling. Their brilliancy does not conceal emptiness, but adorns abundance. When such an occasion as Hero's undeserved rejection called for it, the true affection of Beatrice and the true manliness of Benedick appeared. Hence, although both seem duped by the trick which forms the underplot, the ruse which was to make each think the other to be the lovelorn one, it is really they who win the day. Their feelings are not altered by this merry plot; they

are merely given a chance to drop the mask of banter and to express without confusion the love which had long been theirs. Thus the play which began with the silvery laughter of Beatrice ends in general mirth which is yet more joyous.

**Date.** — Since *Much Ado* is not mentioned by Meres, it can hardly have been written before 1598. Entries in the Stationers' Register for August 4 and 24, 1600, and the appearance of a quarto edition in this same year limit the possibilities at the other end. Since the title-page of the quarto asserts that this play had been "sundry times publicly acted," we may assign the date 1599 with considerable confidence.

**Source.** — The main plot was derived originally from the twentieth novel of Bandello, but there is no direct evidence that Shakespeare used either this or its French translation in Belleforest. In this story Benedick and Beatrice do not appear; there is no public rejection of Hero; there is no discovery of the plot by Dogberry and his fellows; and the deception of Claudio is differently managed. Shakespeare's treatment of this last detail has its source in an episode of the fifth book of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, a work several times done into English before Shakespeare's play was written. There is considerable reason for assuming the existence of a lost original for *Much Ado* in the shape of a play, known only by title, called *Benedicke and Betteris*; but it is, of course, impossible to say how much Shakespeare may have owed to this hypothetical predecessor.

**As You Like It.** — Of this most idyllic of all Shakespeare's comedies, the Forest of Arden is not merely the setting; it is the central force of the play, the power which brings laughter out of tears and harmony out of discord. It reminds us of Sherwood forest, the home of Robin Hood and his merry men; but it is more than this. Not only does it harbor beasts and trees never found on English soil, but its shadowy

glades foster a life so free from care and trouble that it becomes to us a symbol of Nature's healing, sweetening influence. Here an exiled Duke and his faithful followers have found a refuge where, free from the envy and bickerings of court, they "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the Golden Age." To them comes the youth Orlando, fleeing from the treachery of a wicked elder brother and from the malice of the usurping Duke. To them comes Rosalind, daughter of the exiled Duke, who has lived at the usurper's court, but has, in her turn, been exiled, and who brings with her Celia, the usurper's daughter, and Touchstone, the lovable court fool. And through these newcomers the Duke and his friends are brought into contact with a shepherd and shepherdess as unreal and as charming as those of Dresden china, and with other country folk who smack more strongly of the soil. In the forest, Rosalind, who has for safety's sake assumed man's attire, again meets Orlando, and the love between them, born of their first meeting at court, becomes stronger and truer amid scenes of delicate comedy and merry laughter. Once in Arden, Orlando ceases to brood morosely over the wrongs done him; Rosalind's wit becomes sweeter while losing none of its keenness; and Touchstone feels himself no longer a plaything, but a man. So we are not surprised when Oliver, the wicked brother, lost in the forest and rescued from mortal danger by the lad he has always sought to injure, awakens to his better self; nor when the usurping Duke, leading an armed expedition against the man he has deposed, is converted at the forest's edge by an old hermit, abandons the throne to

its rightful occupant, and enters upon the religious life. Thus the old Duke comes into his own again, wiser and better than before; and if, among the many marriages which fill the last act with the chiming of marriage bells, there are some which seem little likely to bring lasting happiness, the magic of the woods does much to dissipate our doubts. Only Jaques, the melancholy philosopher, fails to share in the general rejoicing and the glad return. He has been too hardened by the pursuit of his own pleasure and is too shut in by his delightfully cynical philosophy to feel quickly the forest's touch. Yet not even his brilliant perversities can sadden the joyous atmosphere; it is only made the more enjoyable by force of contrast. Since Jaques wishes no joy for himself, we wish none for him, and with little regret we leave him as he has lived, a lonely, fascinating figure.

**Date.** — Like *Much Ado, As You Like It* is not mentioned by Meres, and was entered in the Stationers' Register on August 4, 1600. Some critics have placed this play before *Much Ado*, but, although there is little evidence on either side, the style and tone of the play incline us to place it after, dating it 1599-1600.

**Source.** — *As You Like It* is a dramatization of Lodge's pastoral novel entitled *Rosalynde*, which was founded in its turn on the *Tale of Gamelyn*, incorrectly ascribed to Chaucer. Shakespeare condensed his original to great advantage, leaving out many episodes and so changing others as to give the subject a new and higher unity. The atmosphere of the forest is all of his creation, as are many of the characters, including Jaques and Touchstone.

**Twelfth Night, or What You Will.** — In *Twelfth Night* romance and comedy are less perfectly fused than in

the comedy which preceded it. Here there are two distinct groups of characters, on the one hand riotous old Sir Toby and his crew leading the Puritanical steward Malvolio into the trap baited by his own egotism; on the other, the dreaming Duke, in love with love rather than with the beautiful Olivia whom he woos in vain, and ardently loved by Viola, whose gentle nature is in touching contrast with the doublet and hose which misfortune has compelled her to assume. There is, however, no lack of dramatic unity. In Olivia the two groups meet, for Toby is Olivia's uncle, Malvolio her steward, the Duke her lover, Viola—later happily supplanted by her twin brother Sebastian—the one she loves. Thus the romantic and comic forces act and react upon each other. Yet this play, by reason of its setting, the court of Illyria, was bound to lack the magical atmosphere of the forest, which inspired kindly humor in the serious and gentle seriousness in the merry. If Feste is as witty as Touchstone, he is less of a man; if Viola is more appealing than Rosalind, she has a less sparkling humor. Here the love story is more passionate, the fun more uproarious. Toby is not Falstaff; he is overcome by wine and difficulties as that amazing knight never was; but it is a sad soul which does not roar with Toby in his revels; shout with laughter over the duel which he arranges between the shrinking Viola and the foolish, vain Sir Andrew; and shake in sympathy with his glee over Malvolio's plight when that unlucky man is beguiled into thinking Olivia loves him, and into appearing before her cross-gartered and wreathed in the smiles

which accord so ill with his sour visage. All the more affecting in contrast to this boisterous merriment is the frail figure of Viola, who knows so well "what love women to men may owe." Amid the perfume of flowers and the sob of violins the Duke learns to love this seeming boy better than he knows, and easily forgets the romantic melancholy which was never much more than an agreeable pose.

**Date.** — In the diary of John Manningham for February 2, 1602, is a record of a performance of *Twelfth Night* in the Middle Temple. The absence of the name from Meres's list again limits the date at the other end. The internal evidence, aside from that of style and meter, is negligible, while the latter confirms the usually accepted date of 1601.

**Source.** — The principal source of the plot was probably *Apolonius and Silla*, a story by Barnabe Riche, apparently an adaptation of Belleforest's translation of the twenty-eighth novel of Bandello. There was also an Italian play, *Gl' Ingannati*, acted in Latin translation at Cambridge in 1590 and 1598, which has a similar plot. A German play on the same subject, apparently closely connected with Riche, has given rise to the hypothesis that a lost English play preceded *Twelfth Night*; but this is only conjectural, and there is some evidence that Shakespeare was familiar with Riche's story. If this be the original, Shakespeare improved on it as much as he did on *Rosalynde*, condensing the beginning, knitting together the loose strands at the end, and introducing the whole of the underplot with its rich variety of characters. The only hint for this known is a slight suggestion for Malvolio's madness found in another story of Riche's volume.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE PLAYS OF THE THIRD PERIOD—TRAGEDY

THE Second and Third periods slightly overlap; for *Julius Cæsar*, the first play of the later group, was probably written before *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*. But the change in the character of the plays in these two periods is sharp and decisive, like the change from day to night. Shakespeare has studied the sunlight of human cheerfulness and found it a most interesting problem; now in the mysterious starlight and shadow of human suffering he finds a problem more interesting still.

The three comedies of this period, partly on account of their bitter and sarcastic tone, are not widely read nor usually very much admired; but the great tragedies are the poet's finest work and scarcely equaled in the history of the world.

**Troilus and Cressida.** — Here the story centers around the siege of ancient Troy by the Greeks. Its hero, Troilus, is a young son of Priam, high-spirited and enthusiastic, who is in love with Cressida, daughter of a Trojan priest. Pandarus, Cressida's uncle, acts as go-between for the lovers. Just as the suit of Troilus is crowned with success, Cressida, from motives of policy, is forced to join her father Calchas, who is in the camp of the besieging Greeks. Here her fickle and sensuous nature reveals itself rapidly. She yields to

the love of the Greek commander Diomed and promises to become his mistress. Troilus learns of this, consigns her to oblivion, and attempts, but unsuccessfully, to take revenge on Diomed.

While this love story is progressing, meetings are going on between the Greek and Trojan warriors; a vivid picture is given of conditions in the Greek camp during the truce, and particularly of the insolent pride of Achilles. The story ends with the resumption of hostilities, the slaying of Hector by Achilles, and the resolution of Troilus to revenge his brother's death.

It is very difficult to understand what Shakespeare meant by this play. If it is a tragedy, why do the hero and heroine meet with no special disaster at the end, and why do we feel so little sympathy for the misfortunes of any one in the play? If it is a comedy, why is its sarcastic mirth made more bitter than tears, and why does it end with the death of its noblest minor character and with the violation of all poetic justice? From beginning to end it is the story of disillusion, for it sorts all humanity into two great classes, fools who are cheated and knaves who cheat. Some people think that Shakespeare wrote it in a gloomy, pessimistic mood, with the sardonic laughter of a disappointed, world-weary man. Others, on rather doubtful grounds, believe it a covert satire on some of Shakespeare's fellow dramatists.

**Authorship.** — It is generally agreed that a small part of this play is by another author. The Prologue and most of the Fifth Act are usually considered non-Shakespearean. They differ from the rest of the play in many details of vocabulary, meter, and style.

**Date.** — *Troilus and Cressida* must have been written before 1603, for in the spring of that year an entry in regard to it was made in the Stationers' Register. It must have been written after 1601, for it alludes (Prologue, ll. 23-25) to the Prologue of Jonson's *Poetaster*, a play published in that year. Hence the date of composition would fall during or slightly before 1602. The First Quarto was not published until 1609.

**Sources.** — The main source of this drama was the narrative poem *Troilus and Criseyde* by Chaucer. Contrary to his custom, Shakespeare has degraded the characters of his original, instead of ennobling them. The camp scenes are adapted from Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*; and the challenge of Hector was taken from some translation of Homer, probably that by Chapman. An earlier lost play on this subject by Dekker and Chettle is mentioned in contemporary reference. We do not know whether Shakespeare drew anything from it or not. Scattered hints were probably taken from other sources, as the story of Troy was very popular in the Middle Ages.

**All's Well That Ends Well.** — When a beautiful and noble-minded young woman falls in love with a contemptible scoundrel, forgives his rebuffs, compromises her own dignity to win his affection, and finally persuades him to let her throw herself away on him, — is the result a romance or a tragedy? This is a nice question; and by the answer to it we must determine whether *All's Well That Ends Well* is a romantic comedy like *Twelfth Night* or a satirical comedy bitter as tragedy, like *Troilus and Cressida*.

Helena, a poor orphan girl, has been brought up by the kindly old Countess of Rousillon, and cherishes a deep affection for the Countess's son Bertram, though he neither suspects it nor returns it. She saves the life of the French king, and he in gratitude allows her

to choose her husband from among the noblest young lords of France. Her choice falls on Bertram. Being too politic to offend the king, he reluctantly marries her, but forsakes her on their wedding day to go to the wars. At parting he tells her that he will never accept her as a wife until she can show him his ring on her finger and has a child by him. By disguising herself as a young woman whom Bertram is attempting to seduce, Helena subsequently fulfills the terms of his hard condition. Later, before the king of France she reminds him of his promise, shows his ring in her possession, and states that she is with child by him. The count, outwitted, and in fear of the king's wrath, repentantly accepts her as his wife; and at the end Helena is expected to live happily forever after.

Disagreeable as the plot is when told in outline, it is redeemed in the actual play by the beautiful character given to the heroine. But this, while it vastly tones down the disgusting side of the story, only increases the bitter pathos which is latent there. The more lovely and admirable Helena is, the more she is unfitted for the unworthy part which she is forced to act and the man with whom she is doomed to end her days. A modern thinker could easily read into this "comedy" the world-old bitterness of pearls before swine.

**Date.** — No quarto of this comedy exists, nor is there any mention of such a play as *All's Well That Ends Well* before the publication of the First Folio in 1623. A play of Shakespeare's called *Love's Labour's Won* is mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598; and many think that this was the present comedy under another name. However, the meter, style, and mood of most of the play seem to indicate a later date. The

most common theory is that a first version was written before 1598, and that this was rewritten in the early part of the author's third period. This would put the date of the play in its present form somewhere around 1602.

**Sources.** — The story is taken from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (ninth novel of the third day). It was translated into English by Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure*, where our author probably read it. Shakespeare has added the Countess, Parolles, and one or two minor characters. The conception of the heroine has been greatly ennobled. It is a question whether the bitter tone of the play is due to the dramatist's intention or is the unforeseen result of reducing Boccaccio's improbable story to a living possibility.

**Measure for Measure.** — When Hamlet told his guilty mother that he would set her up a glass where she might see the inmost part of her, he was doing for his mother what Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure* is doing for the lust-spotted world. The play is a trenchant satire on the evils of society. Such realistic pictures of the things that are, but should not be, have always jarred on our æsthetic sense from Aristophanes to Zola, and *Measure for Measure* is one of the most disagreeable of Shakespeare's plays. But no one can deny its power.

Here, as in *All's Well That Ends Well*, we have one beautiful character, that of Isabella, like a light shining in corruption. Here, too, the wronged Mariana, in order to win back the faithless Angelo, is forced to resort to the same device to which Helena had to stoop. But this play is darker and more savage than its predecessor. Angelo, as a governor, sentencing men to death for the very sin which he as a private man is trying to commit, is contemptible on a huger

and more devilish scale than Bertram. Lucio, if not more base than Parolles, is at least more malignant. And Claudio, attempting to save his life by his sister's shame, is an incarnation of the healthy animal joy of life almost wholly divested of the ideals of manhood. In a way, the play ends happily; but it is about as cheerful as the red gleam of sunset which shoots athwart a retreating thunderstorm.

**Date.** — The play was first published in the Folio of 1623. It is generally believed, however, that it was written about 1603. In the first place, the verse tests and general character of the play seem to fit that date; secondly, there are two passages, I, i, 68-73 and II, iv, 27-30, which are usually interpreted as allusions to the attitude of James I toward the people after he came to the throne in 1603; and, thirdly, there are many turns of phrase which remind one of *Hamlet* and which seem to indicate that the two plays were written near together. Barksted's *Myrrha* (1607) contains a passage apparently borrowed from this comedy, which helps in determining the latest possible date of composition.

**Sources.** — Shakespeare borrowed his material from a writer named George Whetstone, who in 1578 printed a play, *Promos and Cassandra*, containing most of the story of *Measure for Measure*. In 1582 the same author published a prose version of the story in his *Heptameron of Civil Discourses*. Whetstone in turn borrowed his material, which came originally from the *Hecatommithi* of Giraldo Cinthio. Shakespeare ennobled the underlying thought as far as he could, and added the character of Mariana.

**Julius Cæsar.** — The interest in *Julius Cæsar* does not focus on any one person as completely as in the other great tragedies. Like the chronicle plays which had preceded it, it gives rather a grand panorama of history than the fate of any particular hero. This ex-

plains its title. It is not the story of Julius Cæsar the man, but of that great political upheaval of which Cæsar was cause and center. That upheaval begins with his attempt at despotism and the crown; it reaches its climax in his death, which disturbs the political equilibrium of the whole nation; and at last subsides with the decline and downfall of Cæsar's enemies. Shakespeare has departed from history in drawing the character of the great conqueror, making it more weak, vain, and pompous than that of the real man. Yet even in the play "the mightiest Julius" is an impressive figure. Alive, he

"doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus";

and his influence, like an unseen force, shapes the fates of the living after he himself is dead.

In so far as the tragedy has any individual hero, that hero is Brutus rather than Cæsar himself. Brutus is a man of noble character, but deficient in practical judgment and knowledge of men. With the best of motives he allows Cassius to hoodwink him and draw him into the conspiracy against Cæsar. Through the same short-sighted generosity he allows his enemy Antony to address the crowd after Cæsar's death, with the result that Antony rouses the people against him and drives him and his fellow conspirators out of Rome. Then when he and Cassius gather an army in Asia to fight with Antony, we find him too impractically scrupulous to raise money by the usual means; and for that reason short of cash and drawn into a quarrel with his brother general. His subsequent

death at Philippi is the logical outcome of his own nature, too good for so evil an age, too short-sighted for so critical a position.

Most of the old Roman heroes inspire respect rather than love; and something of their stern impressiveness lingers in the atmosphere of this Roman play. Here and there it has very touching scenes, such as that between Brutus and his page (IV, iii); but in the main it is great, not through its power to elicit sympathetic tears, but through its dignity and grandeur. It is one of the stateliest of tragedies, lofty in language, majestic in movement, logical and cogent in thought. We can never mourn for Brutus and Portia as we do for Romeo and Juliet, or for Lear and Cordelia; but we feel that we have breathed in their company an air which is keen and bracing, and have caught a glimpse of

“The grandeur that was Rome.”

**Date.** — We have no printed copy of *Julius Cæsar* earlier than that of the First Folio. Since it was not mentioned by Meres in 1598 and was alluded to in 1601 in John Weever's *Mirroure of Martyrs*, it probably appeared between those two dates. Weever says in his dedication that his work “some two years ago was made fit for the print.” This apparently means that he wrote the allusion to *Julius Cæsar* in 1599 and that consequently the play had been produced by then. There is a possible reference to it in Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*, which came out in 1599. Metrical tests and the general character of the play agree with these conclusions. Hence we can put the date between 1599–1601, with a preference for the former year.

**Sources.** — Shakespeare drew his material from North's *Plutarch*, using the lives of Cæsar, Brutus, and Antony. He has



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enlarged the parts of Casca and Lepidus, and made Brutus much nobler than in the original. This last change was a dramatic necessity in order to give the play a hero with whom we could sympathize.

**Hamlet.** — On the surface the story of Hamlet is a comparatively simple one. The young prince is heart-broken over the recent death of his father, and his mother's scandalously hasty marriage to Hamlet's uncle, the usurping sovereign. In this mood he is brought face to face with his father's spirit, told that his uncle was his father's murderer, and given as a sacred duty the task of revenging the crime. To this object he sacrifices all other aims in life — pleasure, ambition, and love. But this savage task is the last one on earth for which his fine-grained nature was fitted. He wastes his energy in feverish efforts which fail to accomplish his purpose, just as many a man wavers helplessly in trying to do something for which nature never intended him. Partly to deceive his enemies, partly to provide a freer expression for his pent-up emotions than the normal conditions of life would justify, he acts the rôle of one who is mentally deranged. Finally, more by chance than any plan of his own, he achieves his revenge on the king, but not until he himself is mortally wounded. His story is the tragedy of a sensitive, refined, imaginative nature which is required to perform a brutal task in a brutal world.

But around this story as a framework Shakespeare has woven such a wealth of poetry and philosophy that the play has been called the "tragedy of thought." It is in Hamlet's brain that the great action of the drama

takes place; the other characters are mere accessories and foils. Here we are brought face to face with the fear and mystery of the future life and the deepest problems of this. It is hardly true to say that Hamlet himself is a philosopher. He gives some very wise advice to the players; but in the main he is grappling problems without solving them, peering into the dark, but bringing from it no definite addition to our knowledge. He represents rather the eternal questioning of the human heart when face to face with the great mysteries of existence; and perhaps this accounts largely for the wide and lasting popularity of the play. Side by side with this deep-souled, earnest man, moving in the shadow of the unseen, with his terrible duties and haunting fears, Shakespeare has placed in intentional mockery the old dotard Polonius, the incarnation of shallow worldly wisdom.

No other play of Shakespeare's has called forth such a mass of comment as this or so many varied interpretations. Neither has any other roused a deeper interest in its readers. The spell which it casts over old and young alike is due partly to the character of the young prince himself, partly to the suggestive mystery with which it invests all problems of life and sorrow.

**Date.** — 'A booke called the Revenge of Hamlett' was entered in the Stationers' Register July, 1602. Consequently, Shakespeare's Preliminary version, as represented by the First Quarto, though not printed until 1603, must have been written in or before the spring months of 1602; the second version 1603-1604.

**Sources.** — The plot came originally from the *Historia Danica*, a history of Denmark in Latin, written in the twelfth century

by Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish scholar. About 1570 the story was retold in French in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*. Besides his debt to Belleforest, it seems almost certain that Shakespeare drew from an earlier English tragedy of *Hamlet* by another man. This earlier play is lost; but Nash, a contemporary writer, alludes to it as early as 1589, and Henslowe's Diary records its performance in 1594. Somewhat before 1590, an early dramatist, Thomas Kyd, had written a play called *The Spanish Tragedy*, which, though far inferior to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, resembled it in many ways. This likeness has caused scholars to suspect that Kyd wrote the early *Hamlet*; and their suspicions are strengthened by an ambiguous and apparently punning allusion to Æsop's *Kidde* in the passage by Nash mentioned above. A crude and brutal German play on the subject has been discovered, which is believed by many to be a translation of Kyd's original tragedy. If this is true, it shows how enormously Shakespeare improved on his source.

**Editions.** — A very badly garbled and crude form of this play was printed in 1603, and is known as the First Quarto. A much better one, which contained most of the tragedy as we read it, appeared in 1604, and is called the Second Quarto. Several other quartos followed, for the play was exceedingly popular. The Folio omits certain passages found in the Second Quarto, and introduces certain new ones. Both the new passages and the omitted ones are included in modern editions; so that, as has often been said, our modern *Hamlet* is longer than any *Hamlet* which Shakespeare left us. The First Quarto is generally regarded as a pirated copy of Shakespeare's scenario, or first rough draft, of the play.

**Othello.** — This play has often been called the tragedy of jealousy, but that is a misleading statement. Othello, as Coleridge pointed out, is not a constitutionally jealous man, such as Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*. His distrust of his wife is the natural suspicion of a man lost amid new and inexplicable surroundings.

Women are proverbially suspicious in business, not because nature made them so, but because, as they are in utter ignorance of standards by which to judge, they feel their helplessness in the face of deceit. Othello feels the same helplessness. Trained up in wars from his cradle, he could tell a true soldier from a traitor at a glance, with the calm confidence of a veteran; but women and their motives are to him an uncharted sea. Suddenly a beautiful young heiress falls in love with him, and leaves home and friends to marry him. He stands on the threshold of a new realm, happy but bewildered. Then comes Iago, his trusted subordinate, — who, as Othello knows, possesses that knowledge of women and of civilian life which he himself lacks, — and whispers in his ear that his bride is false to him; that under this fair veneer lurks the eternal feminine as they had seen it in the common creatures of the camp; that she has fooled her husband as these women have so often fooled his soldiers; and that the rough-and-ready justice of the camp should be her reward. Had Othello any knowledge or experience in such matters to fall back on, he might anchor to that, and become definitely either the trusting husband or the Spartan judge. But as it is, he is whirled back and forth in a maelstrom of agonized doubt, until compass, bearings, and wisdom lost, he ends all in universal shipwreck.

The character of Iago is one of the subtlest studies of intelligent depravity ever created by man. Ostensibly his motive is revenge; but in reality his wickedness seems due rather to a perverted mental activity, unbalanced by heart or conscience. As Napoleon enjoyed manœuvring armies or Lasker studying chess, so

Iago enjoys the sense of his own mental power in handling his human pawns, in feeling himself master of the situation. If he ever had natural affections, they have been atrophied in the pursuit of this devilish game.

With Desdemona the feminine element, which had been negligible in *Julius Cæsar* and thrown into the background in *Hamlet*, becomes a prominent feature, and remains so through the later tragedies. There is a pathetic contrast between the beautiful character of Desdemona and her undeserved fate, just as there is between the real nobility of Othello and the mad act by which he ruins his own happiness. For that reason this is perhaps the most touching of all Shakespeare's tragedies.

**Date.** — The play was certainly published after 1601, for it contains several allusions to Holland's translation of the Latin author Pliny, which appeared in that year. Malone, one of the early editors of Shakespeare, says that *Othello* was acted at Hallowmas, 1604. We not know on what evidence he based this assertion; but since the metrical tests all point to the same date, his statement is generally accepted. The First Quarto did not appear until 1622, six years after Shakespeare died and one year before the appearance of the First Folio. This was the only play published in quarto between Shakespeare's death and 1623. There are frequent oaths in the Quarto which have been very much modified in the Folio, and this strengthens our belief that the manuscript from which the Quarto was printed was written about 1604, for shortly after that date an act was passed against the use of profanity in plays.

**Sources.** — The plot was taken from Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatomithi* (seventh novel of the third decade). A French translation of the Italian was made in 1583–1584, and this Shakespeare may have used. We know of no English translation until

years after Shakespeare died. Many details are changed in the play, and the whole story is raised to a far nobler plane. In the original the heroine is beaten to death with a stocking filled with sand ; Othello is tortured, but refuses to confess, and later is murdered by his wife's revengeful kinsmen. This crude, bloody, and long-drawn-out story is in striking contrast with the masterly ending of the tragedy.

**King Lear.** — As *Romeo and Juliet* shows the tragedy of youth, so *Lear* shows the tragedy of old age. King Lear has probably been a good and able man in his day ; but now time has impaired his judgment, and he is made to suffer fearfully for those errors for which nature, and not he, is to blame. Duped by the hypocritical smoothness of his two elder daughters, he gives them all his lands and power ; while his youngest daughter Cordelia, who truly loves him, is turned away because she is too honest to humor an old man's whim. The result is what might have been expected. Lear has put himself absolutely into the power of his two older daughters, who are the very incarnation of heartlessness and ingratitude. By their inhuman treatment he is driven out into the night and storm, exposing his white head to a tempest so fierce that even the wild beasts refuse to face it. As a result of exposure and mental suffering, his mind becomes unhinged. At last his daughter Cordelia finds him, gives him refuge, and nurses him back to reason and hope. But this momentary gleam of light only makes darker by contrast the end which closely follows, where Cordelia is killed by treachery and Lear dies broken-hearted.

The fate of Lear finds a parallel in that of Gloucester.

ter in the underplot. Like his king, this nobleman has proved an unwise father, favoring the treacherous child and disowning the true. He also is made to pay a fearful penalty for his mistakes, ending in his death. But he is represented as more justly punished, less excusable through the weaknesses of age; and for this reason his grief appeals to us as an intensifying reflection of Lear's misery rather than as a rival for that in our sympathy. The character of Edmund shows some likeness to that of Richard III; and a comparison of the two will show how Shakespeare has developed in the interval. Both are stern, able, and heartless; but Edmund unites to these more complex feelings known only to the close student of life. Weakness and passion mingle in his love; superstition and some faint, abortive motion of conscience unite to torment him when dying.

There is a strangely lyric element about this great tragedy, an element of heart-broken emotion hovering on the edge of passionate song. It is like a great chorus in which the victims of treachery and ingratitude blend their denouncing cries. The tremulous voice of Lear rises terrible above all the others; and to his helpless curses the plaintive satire of the fool answers like a mocking echo in halls of former enjoyment. Thunder and lightning are the fearful accompaniment of the song; and like faint antiphonal responses from the underplot come the voices of the wronged Edgar and the outraged Gloucester.

**Date.** — The date of *King Lear* lies between 1603 and 1606. In 1603 appeared a book (Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*) from which Shakespeare afterward drew

the names of the devils in the pretended ravings of Edgar, together with similar details. In 1606, as we know from an entry in the Stationers' Register, the play was performed at Whitehall at Christmas. A late edition of the old *King Lear* (not Shakespeare's) was entered on the Register May 8, 1605; and it is very plausible that Shakespeare's tragedy was then having a successful run and that the old play was revived to take advantage of an occasion when its story was popular. Hence the date usually given for the composition of *King Lear* is 1604-5. A quarto, with a poor text, and carelessly printed, appeared in 1608; another, (bearing the assumed date of 1608) in 1619. The First Folio text is much the best. Three hundred lines lacking in it are made up for by a hundred lines absent from the quartos.

**Sources.** — The story of Lear in some form or another had appeared in many writers before Shakespeare. The sources from which he drew chiefly were probably the early accounts by Geoffrey of Monmouth, a composite poem called *The Mirror for Magistrates*, Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and lastly an old play of *King Lear*, supposed to be the one acted in 1594. This old play ended happily; Shakespeare first introduced the tragic ending. He also invented Lear's madness, the banishment and disguise of Kent, and the characters of Burgundy and the fool. The underplot he drew from the story of the blind king of Paphlagonia in *Arcadia*, a long, rambling novel of adventure by Sir Philip Sidney.

**Macbeth.** — Macbeth, one of the great Scottish nobles of early times, is led, partly by his own ambition, partly by the instigation of evil supernatural powers, to murder King Duncan and usurp his place on the throne of Scotland. In this bloody task he is aided and encouraged by his wife, a woman of powerful character, whose conscience is temporarily smothered by her frantic desire to advance her husband's career. We are forced to sympathize with this guilty pair, wicked as they



are, because we are made to feel that they are not naturally criminals, that they are swept into crime by the misdirection of energies which, if directed along happier lines, might have been praiseworthy. Macbeth, vigorous and imaginative, has a poet's or conqueror's yearning toward a larger fullness of life, experience, joy. It is the woeful misdirection of this splendid energy through unlawful channels which makes him a murderer, not the callous, animal indifference of the born criminal. Similarly, his wife is a woman of great executive ability, reaching out instinctively for a field large enough in which to make that ability gain its maximum of accomplishment. Nature meant her for a queen; and it is the instinctive effort to find her natural sphere of action, — an effort common to all humanity — which blinds her conscience at the fatal moment. Once entered on their career of evil, they find no chance for turning back. Suspicions are aroused, and Macbeth feels himself forced to guard himself from the effects of the first. The ghosts of his victims haunt his guilty conscience; his wife dies heart-broken with remorse which comes too late; and he himself is killed in battle by his own rebellious countrymen.

Between the characters of Macbeth and his wife the dramatist has drawn a subtle but vital distinction. Macbeth is an unprincipled but imaginative man, with a strong tincture of reverence and awe. Hitherto he has been restrained in the straight path of an upright life by his respect for conventions. When once that barrier is broken down, he has no purely moral check in his own nature to replace it, and rushes like a flood, with ever growing impetus, from crime to crime. His

wife, on the other hand, has a conscience; and conscience, unlike awe for conventions, can be temporarily suppressed, but not destroyed. It reawakes when the first great crime is over, drives the unhappy queen from her sleepless couch night after night, and hounds her at last to death.

This is the shortest of all Shakespeare's plays in actual number of lines; and no other work of his reveals such condensation and lightning-like rapidity of movement. It is the tragedy of eager ambition, which allows a man no respite after the first fatal mistake, but hurries him on irresistibly through crime after crime to the final disaster. Over all, like a dark cloud above a landscape, hovers the presence of the supernatural beings who are training on the sinful but unfortunate monarch to his ruin.

**Authorship.** — The speeches of Hecate and the dialogue connected with them in III, v and IV, i, 39–47 are suspected by many to be the work of Thomas Middleton, a well-known contemporary playwright. They are unquestionably inferior to most of the play. Messrs. Clark and Wright have assigned several other passages to Middleton; but these are now generally regarded as Shakespeare's, and some of them are considered as by no means below his usual high level.

**Date.** — We find no copy of *Macbeth* earlier than the First Folio. It was certainly written before 1610, however; for Dr. Simon Forman saw it acted that year and records the fact in his *Booke of Plaies*. The allusion to "two-fold balls and treble sceptres" (IV, i, 121) shows that the play was written after 1603 when James I became king of both Scotland and England. So does the allusion to the habit of touching for the king's evil (IV, iii, 140–159), — a custom which James revived. The reference to an equivocator in the porter's soliloquy (II, iii) may allude to Henry Garnet, who was tried in 1606 for complicity in the

famous Gunpowder Plot, and who is said to have upheld the doctrine of equivocation. The date of composition is usually placed 1605-6.

**Sources.** — The plot is borrowed from Holinshed's *Historie of Scotland*. Most of the material is taken from the part relating to the reigns of Duncan and Macbeth ; but other incidents, such as the drugging of the grooms, are from the murder of Duncan's ancestor Duffe, which is described in another part of Holinshed.

**Antony and Cleopatra.** — There is no other passion in mankind which makes such fools of wise men, such weaklings of brave ones, as that of sinful love. For this very reason it is the most tragic of all human passions ; and from this comes the dramatic power of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The ruin of a contemptible man is never impressive ; but the ruin of an imposing character like Antony's through the one weak spot in his powerful nature has all the somber impressiveness of a burning city or some other great disaster.

Like *Julius Cæsar*, this play is founded on Roman history. It begins in Egypt with a picture of Antony fascinated by the Egyptian queen. The urgent needs of the divided Roman world call him away to Italy. Here, once free of Cleopatra's presence, he becomes his old self, a reveler, yet diplomatic and self-seeking. From motives of policy he marries Octavia, sister of Octavius Cæsar, and for a brief space seems assured of a brilliant future. But the old spell draws him back. He returns to Cleopatra, and Octavius in revenge for Octavia's wrongs makes war upon him. Cleopatra proves still Antony's evil genius. Her seduction has already drawn him into war ; now her cowardice in the crisis of the battle decides the war

against him. From that point the fate of both is one headlong rush to inevitable ruin.

In the character of Cleopatra, Shakespeare has made a wonderful study of the fascination which beauty and charm exert, even when coupled with moral worthlessness. We do not love her, we do not pity her when she dies; but we feel that in spite of her idle love of power and pleasure, she has given life a richer meaning. We are fascinated by her as by some beautiful poison plant, the sight of which causes an æsthetic thrill, its touch, disease and death.

Powerful as is this play, and in many ways tragic, it by no means stirs our sympathies as do *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*. Sin for Antony and Cleopatra is not at all the unmixed cup of woe which it proves for Macbeth and his lady. Here at the end the lovers pay the price of lust and folly; but before paying that price, they have had its adequate equivalent in the voluptuous joy of life. Moreover, death loses half its terrors for Antony through the very military vigor of his character; and for Cleopatra, because of the cunning which renders it painless. What impresses us most is not the pathos of their fate, but rather the sublime folly with which, deliberately and open-eyed, they barter a world for the intoxicating joy of passion. Impulsive as children, powerful as demigods, they made nations their toys, and life and death a game. Prudence could not rob them of that heritage of delight which they considered their natural birthright, nor death, when it came, undo what they had already enjoyed. Folly on so superhuman a scale becomes, in the highest sense of the word, dramatic.

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**Date.** — In May, 1608, there was entered in the Stationers' Register 'A Book called Antony and Cleopatra'; and this was probably the play under discussion. The internal evidence agrees with this; hence the date is usually set at 1607-8. In spite of the above entry, the book does not appear to have been printed at that time; and the first copy which has come down to us is that in the 1623 Folio.

**Sources.** — Shakespeare's one source appears to have been the *Life of Marcus Antonius* in North's *Plutarch*; and he followed that very closely. The chief changes in the play consist in the omission of certain events which would have clogged the dramatic action.

**Coriolanus.** — Here follows the tragedy of overweening pride. The trouble with Coriolanus is not ambition, as is the case with Macbeth. He cares little for crowns, office, or any outward honor. Self-centered, self-sufficient, contemptuous of all mankind outside of his own immediate circle of friends, he dies at last because he refuses to recognize those ties of sympathy which should bind all men and all classes of men together. He leads his countrymen to battle, and shows great courage at the siege of Corioli. On his return he becomes a candidate for consul. But to win this office, he must conciliate the common people whom he holds in contempt; and instead of conciliating them, he so exasperates them by his overbearing scorn that he is driven out of Rome. With the savage vindictiveness characteristic of insulted pride, he joins the enemies of his country, brings Rome to the edge of ruin, and spares her at last only at the entreaties of his mother. Then he returns to Corioli to be killed there by treachery.

Men like Coriolanus are not lovable, either in real life or fiction; but, despite his faults, he commands

our admiration in his success, and our sympathy in his death. We must remember that ancient Rome had never heard our new doctrine of the freedom and equality of man; that the common people, as drawn by Shakespeare, were objects of contempt and just cause for exasperation. Again, we must remember that if Coriolanus had a high opinion of himself, he also labored hard to deserve it. He was full of the French spirit of *noblesse oblige*. Cruel, arrogant, harsh, he might be; but he was never cowardly, underhanded, or mean. He was a man whose ideals were better than his judgment, and whose prejudiced view of life made his character seem much worse than it was. The lives of such men are usually tragic.

**Date.** — The play was not printed until the appearance of the First Folio, and external evidence as to its date is almost worthless. On the strength of internal evidence, meter, style, etc., which mark it unquestionably as a late play, it is usually assigned to 1609.

**Sources.** — Shakespeare's source was Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus* (North's translation). As in *Julius Cæsar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, he followed Plutarch closely.

**Timon of Athens.** — As *Coriolanus* was the tragedy of a man who is too self-centered, so *Timon* is the tragedy of a man who is not self-centered enough. His good and bad traits alike, generosity and extravagance, friendship and vanity, combine to make him live and breathe in the attitude of other men toward him. From this comes his unbounded prodigality by which in a few years he squanders an enormous fortune in giving pleasure to his friends. From this lack of self-poise, too, comes the tremendous reaction later,

when he learns that his imagined world of love and friendship and popular applause was a mirage of the desert, and finds himself poverty-stricken and alone, the dupe of sharpers, the laughing-stock of fools.

Yet in spite of his lack of balance, he is full of noble qualities. Apemantus has the very thing which he lacks, yet Apemantus is contemptible beside him. The churlish philosopher is like some dingy little scow, which rides out the tempest because the small cargo which it has is all in its hold; Timon is like some splendid, but top-heavy, battleship, which turns turtle in the storm through lack of ballast. There is something lionlike and magnificent, despite its unreason, in the way he accepts the inevitable, and later, after the discovery of the gold, spurns away both the chance of wealth and the human jackals whom it attracts. The same lordly scorn persists after him in the epitaph which he leaves behind:—

“ Here lie I, Timon ; who alive all living men did hate.

Pass by and curse thy fill, but pass, and stay not here thy gait.”

Yet this very epitaph of the dead misanthrope shows the same lack of self-sufficiency which characterized the living Timon. He despises the opinion of men, but he must let them know that he despises it. Coriolanus would have laughed at them from Elysium and scorned to write any epitaph.

No other Shakespearean play, with the exception of *Troilus and Cressida*, shows the human race in a light so contemptible as this. Aside from Timon and his faithful steward, there is not one person in the play

who seems to have a single redeeming trait. All of the others are selfish, and most of them are treacherous and cowardly.

**Authorship.** — It is generally believed that some parts of the play are not by Shakespeare, although opinion is still somewhat divided as to what is and is not his. The scenes and parts of scenes in which Apemantus and some of the minor characters appear are most strongly suspected.

**Date.** — This play was not printed until the publication of the First Folio, and the only evidence which we have for its date is in the meter and style and in the fact that some of the speeches show a strong resemblance to certain ones in *King Lear*. The date most generally approved is 1607-8.

**Sources.** — The direct source was probably a short account of Timon in Plutarch's *Life of Marcus Antonius*. The same story also appears in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, where Shakespeare may have read it. Both of these accounts, however, contain but a small part of the material found in the play. Certain details missing in them, such as the discovery of the gold, etc., are found in *Timon or the Misanthrope*, a dialogue by Lucian, one of the later of the ancient Greek writers. As far as we know, Lucian had not been translated into English at this time; but there were copies of his works in Latin, French, and Italian. We cannot say whether Shakespeare had read them or not. In 1842 a play on Timon was printed from an old manuscript which is supposed to have been written about 1600. This contains a banquet scene, a faithful steward, and the finding of the gold. This has the appearance of an academic play rather than one meant for the public theaters, so it is probable that Shakespeare never heard of it; but it is barely possible that he knew it and used it as a source.

The most helpful book yet written on the period is: *Shakespearean Tragedy*, by A. C. Bradley (London, Macmillan, 1910 (1st ed. 1904)).



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PLAYS OF THE FOURTH PERIOD — ROMANTIC TRAGI-COMEDY

No less clear than the interest in tragic themes which attracted the London audiences for the half-a-dozen years following 1600, is the shifting of popular approval towards a new form of drama about 1608. This was the romantic tragi-comedy, a type of drama which puts a theme of sentimental interest into events and situations that come close to the tragic. Shakespeare's plays of this type are often called romances, since they tell a story of the same type found in romantic novels of the time. His plays contain rather less of the tragic, and more of fanciful and playful humor than do the plays of the other famous masters in this type, Beaumont and Fletcher; his characters are rather more lifelike and appealing.

While the tragi-comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, which were written from 1609 to 1611, have been shown to have influenced Shakespeare in his romances, yet in several ways they are very different. The work of Beaumont and Fletcher tells of court intrigue and exaggerated passions of hatred, envy, and lust; Shakespeare's plays tell of out-of-door adventures, and the restoration and reconciliation of families and friends parted by misfortune. Fletcher contrive. well-con-

structed plots, depending, indeed, rather too much on incident and situation for effect; Shakespeare chooses for his plots stories which possess only slight unity of theme, and depends upon character and atmosphere for his appeal. Thus the romances of Shakespeare stand out as a strongly marked part of his work, different in treatment from the plays of his rivals which perhaps suggested his use of this form. Here, as everywhere, Shakespeare exhibits complete mastery of the form in which he works.

In addition to the romances of this period, Shakespeare had some share in the undramatic and belated chronicle play, *The Life of Henry the Eighth*, most of which is assigned to John Fletcher. In looseness of construction, in the emphasis on character in distress, and in the introduction of a masque, as well as in other ways, this play resembles the tragi-comedies of the period rather than any earlier chronicle. Thus the term "romantic tragi-comedy" may be properly used to describe all the work of the Fourth Period.

**Pericles, Prince of Tyre**, was probably the earliest, as it is certainly the weakest, of the dramatic romances. But the story was one of the most popular in all fiction, and *Pericles* was, no doubt, in its time what its first title-page claimed for it, a 'much-admired play.' Its hero is a wandering knight of chivalry, buffeted by storm and misfortune from one shore to another. The five acts which tell his adventures are like five islands, widely separated, and washed by great surges of good and ill luck. The significance of his daughter's name, Marina, is intensified for us when we realize that in this play the sea is not only her birthplace, but is the

symbol throughout of Fortune and Romance. From the polluted coast of Antioch, where Pericles reads the vile King his riddle and escapes, past Tarsus, where he assists Creon, the governor of a helpless city, to Pentapolis, where, shipwrecked and a stranger, he wins the tournament and the hand of the Princess Thaisa, the waves of chance carry the Prince. They overwhelm him in the great storm which robs him of his wife, and gives him his little Marina; but they bear the unconscious Thaisa safely to land, and in after years their wild riders, the pirates, save Marina from death at the hands of Creon, and bring her to Mitylene. Here, upon his storm-bound ship, the mourning Pericles recovers his daughter; and at Ephesus, near by, the waves give back his wife, through the kind influence of Diana, their goddess. We are never far from the sound of the shore, and the lines of the play we best recall are those that tell of "humming water" and "the rapture of the sea."

*Pericles* in its original scheme was a play of adventure rather than a dramatic romance. The first two acts, in which Shakespeare could have had no hand, are disjointed and ineffective. To help out the stage action, Shakespeare's collaborator introduced John Gower, the mediæval poet, as a "Prologue," to the acts. He was supplemented, when his affectedly antique diction failed him, by dumb show, the last straw clutched at by the desperate playwright. But at the beginning of Act III the master's music swells out with no uncertain note, and we are lifted into the upper regions of true dramatic poetry as Pericles speaks to the storm at sea: —

“Thou god of this great vast, rebuke these surges  
Which wash both heaven and hell; and thou that hast  
Upon the winds command, bind them in brass,  
Having call'd them from the deep! . . .  
The seaman's whistle  
Is as a whisper in the ears of death,  
Unheard.”

lished, called "The Painful Adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre. Being the true History of the Play of Pericles, as it was lately presented by the worthy and ancient poet John Gower." The author was George Wilkins, a playwright of some ability. He is generally accepted as Shakespeare's collaborator. The claims of William Rowley for a share in the scenes of low life have little foundation.

**Source.** — Shakespeare used Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and the version in Laurence Twine's *Pattern of Painful Adventures*, 1606. The tale is also in the *Gesta Romanorum*.

**Cymbeline.** — "A father cruel, and a step-dame false,  
A foolish suitor to a wedded lady,  
That hath her husband banish'd."

Thus Imogen, the heroine of the play, and the daughter of Cymbeline, king of Britain, describes her own condition at the beginning of the story. The theme of the long and complicated tale that follows is her fidelity under this affliction. Neither her father's anger, nor the stealthy deception of the false stepmother, nor the base lust of her brutish half-brother Cloten, nor the seductive tongue of the villainous Italian Iachimo, her husband's friend; nor even the knowledge of her own husband's sudden suspicion of her, and his instructions to have her slain, shake in the least degree her true affection. Such constancy cannot fail of its reward, and in the end Imogen wins back both father and husband.

In such a story, where virtue's self is made to shine, other characters must of necessity suffer. Posthumus, Imogen's husband, appears weak and impulsive, foolish in making his wife's constancy a matter for wagers, and absurdly quick to believe the worst of her. His weakness is, however, in part atoned for by his gallant fight in defense of his native Britain, and by his out-

burst of genuine shame and remorse when perception of his unjust treatment of Imogen comes to him. Cymbeline, the aged king, has all the irascibility of Lear, with none of his tenderness. The wicked Queen and her son are purely wicked. Only the faithful servant, Pisanio, a minor figure, has our sympathy in this court group.

But in the exiled noble Belarius, and the two sons of Cymbeline whom he has stolen in infancy and brought up with him in a wild life in the mountains, single-hearted nobility rules. When Imogen, disguised as a page, in her flight from the court to Posthumus comes upon them, there is the instant sympathy of noble minds, and there is a brief respite from her misfortunes. They rid her of the troublesome Cloten, and their victory over Rome brings to book the intriguing Iachimo and accomplishes her final recovery of love and honor. A reading of the play leaves as the brightest picture upon the memory their joy at meeting Imogen, and their grief when the potion she drinks robs them of her. In them we find expressed that noble simplicity which romanticists have always associated with true children of nature.

To Imogen, who has a far longer part to play than any other of Shakespeare's heroines, the poet has also given a completer characterization, in which every charm of the highest type of woman is delineated. The one trait which a too censorious audience might criticize, that meekness in unbearable affliction which makes Chaucer's patient Griselda almost incomprehensible to modern readers, is in Imogen completely redeemed by her resolution in the face of danger, and by a certain

imperiousness which well becomes the daughter of a king.

**Authorship.** — Some later hand probably made up the vision of Posthumus (V, iv, 80-90), where a series of irregular stanzas of inferior poetical merit are inserted to form "an apparition."

**Date.** — Simon Forman, the writer of a diary, who died in 1611, describes the performance of *Cymbeline* at which he was present. The entry occurs between those telling of *Macbeth* (April 20, 1610) and *The Winter's Tale* (May 15, 1611). The tests of verse assign it also to this period. The first print was that of the First Folio, 1623.

**Source.** — From Holinshed Shakespeare learned the only actual historical fact in the play, that one Cunobelinus was an ancient king of Britain. Cymbeline's two sons are likewise from Holinshed, as is the rout of an army by a countryman and his two sons; but the two stories are separate. The ninth novel of the second day of the *Decameron* of Boccaccio tells a story much resembling the part of the play which concerns Posthumus. The play called *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* (1589) contains certain characters not unlike Imogen, Posthumus, Belarius, and Cloten. Fidelia, Imogen's name in disguise, is the heroine's name. But direct borrowing cannot be proved.

**The Winter's Tale.** — Nowhere is Shakespeare more lavish of his powers of characterization and of poetic treatment of life than in this play. He found for his plot a popular romance of the time, in which a true queen, wrongly accused of infidelity with her husband's friend, dies of grief at the death of her son, while her infant daughter, abandoned to the seas in a boat, grows up among shepherds to marry the son of the king of whom her father had been jealous. Disregarding the essentially undramatic nature of the story, as well as its improbabilities, he achieved a signal tri-

umph of his art in the creation of his two heroines, and in his conception of the pastoral scenes, so fresh, joyous, and absolutely free from the artificiality of convention.

In the deeply wronged queen he drew the supreme portrait of woman's fortitude. Hermione is brave, not by nature, but inspired by high resolve for her honor and for her children. Nobly indignant at the slanders uttered against her, her wifely love forgives the slanderer in pity for the blindness of unreason which has caused his action. Shakespeare's dramatic instinct made him alter Hermione's death in the earlier story to life in secret, with poetic justice in store. Artificial as the long period of waiting seems, before the final reconciliation takes place, it is forgotten in the magnificent appeal of the mother's love when the lost daughter kneels in joy before her.

In Perdita, Shakespeare, with incredible skill, depicted the true daughter of such a mother. Although her nature at first seems all innocence, beauty, youth, and joy, yet when trial comes to her in the knowledge that she, a shepherdess, has loved a king's son, and that his father has discovered it, her courage rises with the danger, and her words echo her mother's resolution:—

“I think affliction may subdue the cheek,  
But not take in the mind.”

In the pastoral scenes, the poet gives us an English sheepshearing, with its merrymaking, a pair of honest English country fellows in the old shepherd and his son, the Clown, and the greatest of all beloved vagabonds



in the rogue Autolycus, whose vices, like Falstaff's, are more lovable than other people's virtues. Fortune, which will not suffer him to be honest, makes his thieveries, in her extremity of whim, to be but benefits for others.

Of the other characters, Prince Florizel, Perdita's lover, is that rarest of all dramatic heroes, a young prince with real nobility of soul. Lord Camillo and Lady Paulina are well-drawn types of loyalty and devotion. Leontes alone, the jealous husband, is unreasoning in the violence of his jealousy. As the study of a mind overborne by an obsession, it is a strong yet repulsive picture.

**Date.** — Simon Forman narrates in his diary how he saw the play at the Globe Theater, May 15, 1611. It was probably written about this time. Jonson's *Masque of Oberon*, produced January 1, 1611, contains an antimasque of satyrs which may bear some relation to the similar dance in IV, iv, 331 ff. The First Folio contains the earliest print of the play.

**Source.** — The romance, to which reference has been made above, as the source of *The Winter's Tale*, was Robert Greene's *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*, sometimes called by its later title, *The History of Dorastus and Fawnia*. Fourteen editions followed one another from its appearance in 1588. Greene made the jealous Pandosto king in Bohemia, and Egistus (Polixenes in the play) king of Sicily. In *The Winter's Tale* two kingdoms are interchanged. Nevertheless the "seacoast of Bohemia," so often ridiculed as Shakespeare's stage direction, is found in Greene's story. Three alterations by Shakespeare are of vital importance in improving the plot: the slandered queen is kept alive, instead of dying in grief for her son's death, to be restored again in the famous but theatrical statue scene; Autolycus is created and is given, with Camillo, an important share in the restoration of Perdita; and the complications of Doras-

tus's (Florizel's) destiny as the prospective husband of a princess of Denmark, and Pandosto's (Leontes's) falling in love with his own daughter and his suicide on learning of her true birth, are wisely omitted. The characters of Paulina, the Clown, and some minor persons are Shakespeare's own invention.

According to Professor Neilson, Autolycus and his song in IV iii, 1 ff., may have been partly based on the character of Tom Beggar in Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* (1584).

**The Tempest**, probably the last complete drama from Shakespeare's pen, differs from the other "romances" in possessing a singular unity. It comes, indeed closer than any play, save the *Comedy of Errors*, to fulfilling the demands of unity of action, time, and place. This may be due to the fact that the poet is here making up his own plot, not, as in other cases, dramatizing a novel of extended adventure.

The central theme of *The Tempest* is, like that of the other romances, restoration of those exiled and reconciliation of those at enmity; but the treatment of the story could not be more different. Where the chance of fortune has hitherto brought about the happy ending, here magic and the supernatural in control of man are the means employed. Those who had plotted or connived at the expulsion of Prospero, Duke of Milan, and his being set adrift in an open boat, with his infant daughter and his books for company, are wrecked through his art upon the island of which he has become the master. Ariel, the spirit who serves Prospero, a mysterious, ever changing form, now fire, now a Nymph, now an invisible musician, now a Harpy, striking guilt into the conscience (and yet apparently not interested in either vice or virtue, but

longing only for free idleness), guides all to Prospero's cave, and receives freedom for his toil. His spirit pervades every scene, whether we view the king's son Ferdinand loving innocent Miranda, or the silent king mourning his son's loss, or the guilty conspirators plotting the king's death, or the drunken steward and jester plotting with the servant monster Caliban the overthrow of Prospero. All of them are led, by the wisdom of Prospero acting through Ariel, away from their own wrong impulses, and into reconciliation and peace. How much of *The Tempest* Shakespeare meant as a symbol can never be told ; but here, perhaps, as much as anywhere the temptation to read the philosophy of the poet into the story of the dramatist comes strongly upon the reader.

There are two speeches of Prospero, in particular, where the reader is inclined to believe he is listening to Shakespeare's own voice. In one, Prospero puts a sudden end to his pageant of the spirits, and compares life itself to the transitory play. In the other, Prospero bids farewell to his magic art. These are often interpreted as Shakespeare's own farewell to the stage and to his art, — with what justification every reader must decide for himself.

In this last play there is, it should be said, not the slightest hint of a weakening of the poetic or the dramatic faculty. The falling in love of Miranda, the wonderful and wondering child of purity and nature ; the tempting of Sebastian by the crafty Antonio ; and the creation of Caliban, half-man, half-devil, with his elemental knowledge of nature, and his dull cunning, and his stunted faculties, — all these are the work of

a genius still in the full pride of power. Shakespeare's dramatic work ends suddenly, "like a bright exhalation in the evening."

**Date.** — Edmund Malone's word, unsupported by other evidence, puts the play as already in existence in the autumn of 1611. The play certainly is later than the wreck of Somers's ship, in 1609. It was acted during the marriage festivities of the Princess Elizabeth in 1613, when other plays were revived.

**Sources.** — Two accounts by Sylvester Jourdan and William Strachey told, soon after the event, of the casting away upon the Bermuda Islands of a ship belonging to the Virginia expedition of Somers in 609. From these Shakespeare drew for many details. His island, however, is clearly not Bermuda, nor, indeed, any known land. Other details have been traced from various sources. Ariel is a name of a spirit in mediæval literature of cabalistic secrets. Montaigne's *Essays*, translated by Florio (1603), furnished the hint of Gonzalo's imaginary commonwealth (II, i, 147 ff.). Setebos has been found as a devil-god of the Patagonians in Eden's *History of Travaile* (1577). The rest of the story, which is nine-tenths of the whole, is probably Shakespeare's own, though the central theme of an exiled prince, whose daughter marries his enemy, who has an attendant spirit, and who through magic compels the captive prince to carry logs, may come from some old folk tale; since a German play, *Die Schöne Sidea*, by Jakob Ayrrer of Nuremberg (died 1605), possesses all these details. The relations, if any, between the two plays are remote.

**The Life of Henry the Eighth**, the last of the historical plays, in date of composition as in the history it pictures, suffers from the very fact that it boasts in its second title, *All is True*. The play might have been built around any one of the half-dozen persons which in turn claim our chief interest, — Buckingham, Queen Katherine, Anne Bullen, the King, Wolsey, or Cran-

mer; but fidelity to history, while it did not hinder some slight alteration of incident and time, required that each of these should in turn be distinguished, if a complete picture of the times of Henry VIII were to be given. The result was a complete abandonment of anything like unity of theme.

It is, of course, a disappointment to one who has just read *I Henry IV*. On the other hand, this play may be regarded as a kind of pageant, as the word is used nowadays in England and America. It presents, in the manner of a modern pageant, a series of brilliant scenes telling of Buckingham's fall, of Wolsey's triumph and ruin, of Katherine's trial and death, of Anne Bullen's coronation, and of Granmer's advancement, joined together by the well-drawn character of the King, powerful, masterful, selfish, and vindictive, but not without a suggestion of better qualities. The gayety of the Masque, in the first act, where King Henry first meets Anne Bullen, is also in perfect harmony with the modern pageant, which always employs music and dancing as aids to the picture.

In Queen Katherine we have a suffering and wronged woman, gifted with queenly grace and dignity, and with strong sympathies and a keen sense of justice. From her first entrance, when she ventures, Esther-like, into the presence of the king to intercede for an oppressed people, through all her vain struggle against the King's wayward inclination and the Cardinal's wiles, up to the very moment when she is stricken with mortal illness, she holds our sympathy. If in her great trial scene she is weaker and more impulsive than Hermione in hers, yet the circumstances are

different; she is not keyed up to so high an endeavor as that lady, nor in so much danger for herself or her children.

**Authorship.** — Differences in style and meter, and the fragmentary quality of the whole play have long confirmed the theory that Shakespeare in *Henry VIII* engaged in a very loose sort of collaboration. Only the Buckingham scene (I, i.), the scenes of Katherine's entrance and trial (I, ii, II, iv), a brief scene of Anne Bullen (II, iii), and the first half of the scene in which Wolsey's schemes are exposed and Henry alienated from him (III, i, 1-203) are confidently ascribed to Shakespeare. The rest of the play fits best the style and metrical habit of John Fletcher, at this time one of the most popular dramatists of London.

**Date.** — The Globe Theater was burned on June 29, 1613, when a play called *Henry VIII or All is True* was being performed. So far as stylistic tests can decide, this was not long after the composition of the play. Sir Henry Wotton, the antiquarian, writing from hearsay knowledge, says that the play being acted at the time of the fire was "a new play called *All is True*." Shakespeare's scenes in this drama may thus have been his last dramatic work. A praise of King James in the last scene was probably written not later than the rest of the play, and thus insures a date later than 1603. The earliest print of the play was the First Folio, 1623.

**Source.** — Holinshed was the chief source. Halle furnished certain details. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* tells the Cranmer story.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FAMOUS MISTAKES AND DELUSIONS ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

THE mystery which enwraps so much of Shakespeare's life, combined with the interest which naturally centers around a great genius, is ideally calculated to stimulate human imagination to fantastic guesswork. It is probably for this reason that a number of famous delusions about Shakespeare have at different times arisen. Some of these are of sufficient importance to deserve attention. Three widely different types of mistakes can be observed.

**The Shakespeare Apocrypha.** — The most excusable of these delusions was the belief that Shakespeare wrote a large number of plays which are now known to be the work of other men. Some of these plays were printed, either during the poet's life or after his death, with "William Shakespeare" or "W. S." on the title-page. It is now practically certain that the full name was a printer's forgery, and that the letters W. S. were either designed to deceive or else the initials of some contemporary dramatist (such as Wentworth Smith, for example). Six of these spurious dramas were included in the Third Folio of Shakespeare's complete works. Since this came out forty years after the First Folio, when men who had known Shakespeare personally

were dead, we certainly cannot believe that its editor had better information than those of the First Folio, who were the poet's personal friends, and who did not include these plays. The spurious dramas printed in the Third Folio were: *The London Prodigal*, *The History of the Life and Death of Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *The History of Sir John Oldcastle*, *The Puritan Widow*, *Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *The Tragedy of Locrine*.

Among the other plays imputed to Shakespeare at various times are: *Fair Em*, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, *Arden of Feversham*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Edward Third*, and *Sir Thomas More*. Some good critics, chiefly literary men, not scholars, still believe that Shakespeare wrote parts of the last three; but it is practically certain that he had nothing to do with the others, and his part in all these disputed plays is extremely doubtful.

**Shakespearean Forgeries.** — Men who assigned the above spurious plays to Shakespeare made an honest error of judgment, but other men have committed deliberate forgeries in regard to him. At the end of the eighteenth century, W. H. Ireland forged papers which he attempted to impose on the public as recently discovered Mss. of the 'Swan of Avon.' One of these finds, a play called *Vortigern*, was actually acted by a prominent company. But the unShakespearean character of these 'great discoveries' was soon perceived, and Ireland at length confessed.

Another famous fraud of a wholly different kind was that of J. P. Collier. The great services which this man has rendered to the world of scholarship make



all men reluctant to pass too severe censure on his conduct; but it is only fair that the public should be warned against deception. He pretended to have found a folio copy of the plays corrected and revised on the margin in the handwriting of a contemporary of Shakespeare. Some of these revisions were actual improvements on the carelessly printed text; but it is now known that they were forgeries. Similar changes were made by him in other important documents, and were for some time accepted as genuine.

**The Bacon Controversy.** — During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the contention was started that Shakespeare was merely an obscure actor who never wrote a line, and that the Shakespearean plays were actually written by his great contemporary, Francis Bacon, who was pleased to let these products of his own genius appear under the name of another man. This delusion is usually considered as beginning with an article by Miss Delia Bacon in *Putnam's Monthly* (January, 1856), although the idea had been twice suggested during the eight years preceding.

The Baconian arguments fall into four groups. First, they argue that there is no proof to establish the identity of Shakespeare, the actor, with the author of the plays. This is untrue. We have more than one reference by his contemporaries, identifying the actor with the poet, some so strong that the Baconians themselves can explain them away only by assuming that the writer is speaking in irony or that he willfully deceives the public. By assumptions like that, any one could prove anything.

The second point of the Baconians is that a man of

Shakespeare's limited education could not have written plays replete with so many kinds of learning. This argument is weak at both ends. It assumes as true that Shakespeare had a limited education and that his plays are full of knowledge learned from books rather than from life. The first of these points rests on vague tradition only, and the second is still a debatable question. But even if we admit these two points, what then? Shakespeare was twenty-nine years old and had probably lived in London for five or six years when the first book from his hand appeared in its present form. Any man capable of writing *Hamlet* could educate himself during several years in the heart of a great city.

Thirdly, a certain lady found in Bacon's writings a large number of expressions which seemed to her to resemble similar phrases in Shakespeare. Except to the mind of an ardent Baconian many of these show no likeness whatever. Most of those which do show any likeness were proverbial or stock expressions which can be found in other writers.

Lastly, various Baconians have repeatedly asserted that they had found in the First Folio acrostic signatures of Bacon's name; that one could spell Bacon or Francis Bacon by picking out letters in the text according to certain rules. But unfortunately either these acrostics do not work out, or else the rules are so loose that similar acrostics can be found anywhere, in modern books or pamphlets, and even on the grave-stones of our ancestors. Many of the more intelligent Baconians themselves have no faith in this last form of evidence.

On the other hand, there are certain very weighty objections to Bacon as author of the plays. In the first place, it is a miracle that one man should produce either the works of Bacon or Shakespeare alone; it is a miracle past all belief that the same man in one lifetime should have written both. In the second place, the little verse which Bacon is known to have written shows clearly how limited he was as a poet, no matter how great in other directions. Moreover, his prose, though splendid in its kind, is wholly unlike the prose of Shakespeare. Finally, Bacon's contemptuous attitude toward woman and marriage was diametrically opposed to that found in Shakespeare. To imagine that the same man wrote both sets of writings is to assume that he was one man one day and another the next.

The advocates of this strange theory vary greatly in fairmindedness and ability, and it is not just to judge them all by the mad extremes of some; but, nevertheless, their writings, taken as a whole, form one of the strangest medleys of garbled facts and fallacious reasoning which has ever imposed on an honest and intelligent but uninformed public.

On the *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, see C. F. Tucker Brooke's edition of fourteen spurious plays, under this title, Oxford, University Press, 1908. On the forgeries and other questions, Appendix I of Mr. Lee's *Life* is the readiest place of reference.

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